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THE SERVICE EDITION
OF
THE WORKS OF
RUDYARD KIPLING



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MANY INVENTIONS

VOL. I

MANY INVENTIONS

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

‘Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.’—*Ecclesiastes vii. 29.*

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TO THE TRUE ROMANCE

*Thy face is far from this our war,
Our call and counter-cry,
I shall not find Thee quick and kind,
Nor know Thee till I die.
Enough for me in dreams to see
And touch Thy garments' hem :
Thy feet have trod so near to God
I may not follow them.*

Through wantonness if men profess
They weary of Thy parts,
E'en let them die at blasphemy
And perish with their arts ;
But we that love, but we that prove
Thine excellence august,
While we adore discover more
Thee perfect, wise, and just.

Since spoken word Man's spirit stirred
Beyond his belly-need,
What is is Thine of fair design
In thought and craft and deed ;
Each stroke aright of toil and fight,
That was and that shall be,
And hope too high wherefore we die,
Has birth and worth in Thee.

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Who holds by Thee hath Heaven in fee
To gild his dross thereby,
And knowledge sure that he endure
A child until he die—
For to make plain that man's disdain
Is but new Beauty's birth—
For to possess in loneliness
The joy of all the earth.

As Thou didst teach all lovers speech
And Life her mystery,
So shalt Thou rule by every school
Till love and longing die,
Who wast or yet the lights were set,
A whisper in the Void,
Who shalt be sung through planets young
When this is clean destroyed.

Beyond the bounds our staring rounds,
Across the pressing dark,
The children wise of outer skies
Look hitherward and mark
A light that shifts, a glare that drifts,
Rekindling thus and thus,
Not all forlorn, for Thou hast borne
Strange tales to them of us.

Time hath no tide but must abide
The servant of Thy will;
Tide hath no time, for to Thy rhyme
The ranging stars stand still—
Regent of spheres that lock our fears
Our hopes invisible,
Oh 'twas certes at Thy decrees
We fashioned Heaven and Hell !

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Pure Wisdom hath no certain path
That lacks thy morning-eyne,
And captains bold by Thee controlled
Most like to Gods design ;
Thou art the Voice to kingly boys
To lift them through the fight,
And Comfortress of Unsuccess,
To give the dead good-night—

A veil to draw 'twixt God His Law
And Man's infirmity,
A shadow kind to dumb and blind
The shambles where we die ;
A sum to trick th' arithmetic
Too base of leaguing odds,
The spur of trust, the curb of lust,
Thou handmaid of the Gods !

Oh Charity, all patiently
Abiding wrack and scaith !
Oh Faith, that meets ten thousand cheats
Yet drops no jot of faith !
Devil and brute Thou dost transmute
To higher, lordlier show,
Who art in sooth that utter Truth
The careless angels know !

*Thy face is far from this our war,
Our call and counter-cry,
I may not find Thee quick and kind,
Nor know Thee till I die.*

*Yet may I look with heart unshook
On blow brought home or missed—*

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*Yet may I hear with equal ear
The clarions down the List ;
Yet set my lance above mischance
And ride the barriere—
Oh, hit or miss, how little 'tis,
My Lady is not there !*

THE DISTURBER OF TRAFFIC

From the wheel and the drift of Things
Deliver us, good Lord ;
And we will meet the wrath of kings,
The faggot, and the sword.

Lay not Thy toil before our eyes,
Nor vex us with Thy wars,
Lest we should feel the straining skies
O'ertrod by trampling stars.

A veil 'twixt us and Thee, dread Lord,
A veil 'twixt us and Thee :
Lest we should hear too clear, too clear,
And unto madness see !

Miriam Cohen.

THE Brothers of the Trinity order that none unconnected with their service shall be found in or on one of their Lights during the hours of darkness ; but their servants can be made to think otherwise. If you are fair-spoken and take an interest in their duties, they will allow you to sit with them through the

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long night and help to scare the ships into mid-channel.

Of the English south-coast Lights, that of St. Cecilia-under-the-Cliff is the most powerful, for it guards a very foggy coast. When the sea-mist veils all, St. Cecilia turns a hooded head to the sea and sings a song of two words once every minute. From the land that song resembles the bellowing of a brazen bull; but off-shore they understand, and the steamers grunt gratefully in answer.

Fenwick, who was on duty one night, lent me a pair of black glass spectacles, without which no man can look at the Light unblinded, and busied himself in last touches to the lenses before twilight fell. The width of the English Channel beneath us lay as smooth and as many-coloured as the inside of an oyster shell. A little Sunderland cargo-boat had made her signal to Lloyd's Agency, half a mile up the coast, and was lumbering down to the sunset, her wake lying white behind her. One star came out over the cliffs, the waters turned to lead colour, and St. Cecilia's Light shot out across the sea in eight long pencils that wheeled slowly from right to left, melted into one beam of solid light laid down directly in front of the tower, dissolved again into eight, and passed away. The light-frame of the thousand lenses circled on its rollers, and the compressed-

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air engine that drove it hummed like a blue-bottle under a glass. The hand of the indicator on the wall pulsed from mark to mark. Eight pulse-beats timed one half-revolution of the Light; neither more nor less.

Fenwick checked the first few revolutions carefully; he opened the engine's feed-pipe a trifle, looked at the racing governor, and again at the indicator, and said: 'She'll do for the next few hours. We've just sent our regular engine to London, and this spare one's not by any manner so accurate.'

'And what would happen if the compressed air gave out?' I asked.

'We'd have to turn the flash by hand, keeping an eye on the indicator. There's a regular crank for that. But it hasn't happened yet. We'll need all our compressed air to-night.'

'Why?' said I. I had been watching him for not more than a minute.

'Look,' he answered, and I saw that the dead sea-mist had risen out of the lifeless sea and wrapped us while my back had been turned. The pencils of the Light marched staggeringly across tilted floors of white cloud. From the balcony round the light-room the white walls of the light-house ran down into swirling, smoking space. The noise of the tide coming in very

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lazily over the rocks was choked down to a thick drawl.

‘That’s the way our sea-fogs come,’ said Fenwick, with an air of ownership. ‘Hark, now, to that little fool calling out ‘fore he’s hurt.’

Something in the mist was bleating like an indignant calf; it might have been half a mile or half a hundred miles away.

‘Does he suppose we’ve gone to bed?’ continued Fenwick. ‘You’ll hear us talk to him in a minute. He knows puffickly where he is, and he’s carrying on to be told like if he was insured.’

‘Who is “he”?’

‘That Sunderland boat, o’ course. Ah!’

I could hear a steam-engine hiss down below in the mist where the dynamos that fed the Light were clacking together. Then there came a roar that split the fog and shook the lighthouse.

‘*Git-toot!*’ blared the fog-horn of St. Cecilia. The bleating ceased.

‘Little fool!’ Fenwick repeated. Then, listening: ‘Blest if that aren’t another of them! Well, well, they always say that a fog do draw the ships of the sea together. They’ll be calling all night, and so’ll the siren. We’re expecting some tea-ships up-Channel. . . . If you put my coat on that chair, you’ll feel more so-fash, sir.’

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It is no pleasant thing to thrust your company upon a man for the night. I looked at Fenwick, and Fenwick looked at me; each gauging the other's capacities for boring and being bored. Fenwick was an old, clean-shaven, gray-haired man who had followed the sea for thirty years, and knew nothing of the land except the lighthouse in which he served. He fenced cautiously to find out the little that I knew and talked down to my level, till it came out that I had met a captain in the merchant service who had once commanded a ship in which Fenwick's son had served; and further, that I had seen some places that Fenwick had touched at. He began with a dissertation on pilotage in the Hugli. I had been privileged to know a Hugli pilot intimately. Fenwick had only seen the imposing and masterful breed from a ship's chains, and his intercourse had been cut down to 'Quarter less five,' and remarks of a strictly business-like nature. Hereupon he ceased to talk down to me, and became so amazingly technical that I was forced to beg him to explain every other sentence. This set him fully at his ease; and then we spoke as men together, each too interested to think of anything except the subject in hand. And that subject was wrecks, and voyages, and old-time trading, and ships cast away in desolate seas,

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steamers we both had known, their merits and demerits, lading, Lloyd's, and, above all, Lights. The talk always came back to Lights: Lights of the Channel; Lights on forgotten islands, and men forgotten on them; Light-ships—two months' duty and one month's leave—tossing on kinked cables in ever troubled tideways; and Lights that men had seen where never lighthouse was marked on the charts.

Omitting all those stories, and omitting also the wonderful ways by which he arrived at them, I tell here, from Fenwick's mouth, one that was not the least amazing. It was delivered in pieces between the roller-skate rattle of the revolving lenses, the bellowing of the fog-horn below, the answering calls from the sea, and the sharp tap of reckless night-birds that flung themselves at the glasses. It concerned a man called Dowse, once an intimate friend of Fenwick, now a waterman at Portsmouth, believing that the guilt of blood is on his head, and finding no rest either at Portsmouth or Gosport Hard.

.... 'And if anybody was to come to you and say, "I know the Javva currents," don't you listen to him; for those currents is never yet known to mortal man. Sometimes they're here, sometimes they're there, but they never runs less than five

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knots an hour through and among those islands of the Eastern Archipelagus. There's reverse currents in the Gulf of Boni—and that's up north in Celebes—that no man can explain ; and through all those Javva passages from the Bali Narrows, Dutch Gut, and Ombay, which I take it is the safest, they chop and they change, and they banks the tides fust on one shore and then on another, till your ship's tore in two. I've come through the Bali Narrows, stern first, in the heart o' the south-east monsoon, with a sou'-sou'-west wind blowing atop of the northerly flood, and our skipper said he wouldn't do it again, not for all Jamrach's. You've heard o' Jamrach's, sir ?'

‘Yes ; and was Dowse stationed in the Bali Narrows ?’ I said.

‘No ; he was not at Bali, but much more east o’ them passages, and that’s Flores Strait, at the east end o’ Flores. It’s all on the way south to Australia when you’re running through that Eastern Archipelagus. Sometimes you go through Bali Narrows if you’re full-powered, and sometimes through Flores Strait, so as to stand south at once, and fetch round Timor, keeping well clear o’ the Sahul Bank. Elseways, if you aren’t full-powered, why it stands to reason you go round by the Ombay Passage, keeping careful to the north side. You understand that, sir ?’

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I was not full-powered, and judged it safer to keep to the north side—of Silence.

‘And on Flores Strait, in the fairway between Adonare Island and the mainland, they put Dowse in charge of a screw-pile Light called the Wurlee Light. It’s less than a mile across the head of Flores Strait. Then it opens out to ten or twelve mile for Solor Strait, and then it narrows again to a three-mile gut, with a topplin’ flamin’ volcano by it. That’s old Loby Toby by Loby Toby Strait, and if you keep his Light and the Wurlee Light in a line you won’t take much harm, not on the darkest night. That’s what Dowse told me, and I can well believe him, knowing these seas myself; but you must ever be mindful of the currents. And there they put Dowse, since he was the only man that that Dutch Government which owns Flores could find that would go to Wurlee and tend a fixed Light. Mostly they uses Dutch and Italians; Englishmen being said to drink when alone. I never could rightly find out what made Dowse accept of that position, but accept he did, and used to sit for to watch the tigers come out of the forests to hunt for crabs and such like round about the lighthouse at low tide. The water was always warm in those parts, as I know well, and uncommon sticky, and it ran with the tides as thick and smooth as hogwash in

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a trough. There was another man along with Dowse in the Light, but he wasn't rightly a man. He was a Kling. No, nor yet a Kling he wasn't, but his skin was in little flakes and cracks all over, from living so much in the salt water as was his usual custom. His hands was all webby-foot, too. He was called, I remember Dowse saying now, an Orange-Lord, on account of his habits. You've heard of an Orange-Lord, sir?

'Orang-Laut?' I suggested.

'That's the name,' said Fenwick, smacking his knee. 'An Orang-Laut, of course, and his name was Challong; what they call a sea-gypsy. Dowse told me that that man, long hair and all, would go swimming up and down the straits just for something to do; running down on one tide and back again with the other, swimming side-stroke, and the tides going tremenjus strong. Elseways he'd be skipping about the beach along with the tigers at low tide, for he was most part a beast; or he'd sit in a little boat praying to old Loby Toby of an evening when the volcano was spitting red at the south end of the strait. Dowse told me that he wasn't a companionable man, like you and me might have been to Dowse.

'Now I can never rightly come at what it was that began to ail Dowse after he had been there a year or something less. He was saving of all his

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pay and tending to his Light, and now and again he'd have a fight with Challong and tip him off the Light into the sea. Then, he told me, his head began to feel streaky from looking at the tide so long. He said there was long streaks of white running inside it ; like wall-paper that hadn't been properly pasted up, he said. The streaks, they would run with the tides, north and south, twice a day, accordin' to them currents, and he'd lie down on the planking—it was a screw-pile Light—with his eye to a crack and watch the water streaking through the piles just so quiet as hogwash. He said the only comfort he got was at slack water. Then the streaks in his head went round and round like a sampan in a tide-rip ; but that was heaven, he said, to the other kind of streaks,—the straight ones that looked like arrows on a wind-chart, but much more regular, and that was the trouble of it. No more he couldn't ever keep his eyes off the tides that ran up and down so strong, but as soon as ever he looked at the high hills standing all along Flores Strait for rest and comfort his eyes would be pulled down like to the nesty streaky water ; and when they once got there he couldn't pull them away again till the tide changed. He told me all this himself, speaking just as though he was talking of somebody else.'

‘Where did you meet him?’ I asked.

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‘In Portsmouth harbour, a-cleaning the brasses of a Ryde boat, but I’d known him off and on through following the sea for many years. Yes, he spoke about himself very curious, and all as if he was in the next room laying there dead. Those streaks, they preyed upon his intellecks, he said; and he made up his mind, every time that the Dutch gunboat that attends to the Lights in those parts come along, that he’d ask to be took off. But as soon as she did come something went click in his throat, and he was so took up with watching her masts, because they ran longways, in the contrary direction to his streaks, that he could never say a word until she was gone away and her masts was under sea again. Then, he said, he’d cry by the hour; and Challong swum round and round the Light, laughin’ at him and splashin’ water with his webby-foot hands. At last he took it into his pore sick head that the ships, and particularly the steamers that came by,—there wasn’t many of them,—made the streaks, instead of the tides as was natural. He used to sit, he told me, cursing every boat that come along,—sometimes a junk, sometimes a Dutch brig, and now and again a steamer rounding Flores Head and poking about in the mouth of the strait. Or there’d come a boat from Australia running north past old Loby Toby hunting for a fair current,

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but never throwing out any papers that Challong might pick up for Dowse to read. Generally speaking, the steamers kept more westerly, but now and again they came looking for Timor and the west coast of Australia. Dowse used to shout to them to go round by the Ombay Passage, and not to come streaking past him, making the water all streaky, but it wasn't likely they'd hear. He says to himself after a month, "I'll give them one more chance," he says. "If the next boat don't attend to my just representations,"—he says he remembers using those very words to Challong,— "I'll stop the fairway."

'The next boat was a Two-streak cargo-boat very anxious to make her northing. She waddled through under old Loby Toby at the south end of the strait, and she passed within a quarter of a mile of the Wurlee Light at the north end, in seventeen fathom o' water, the tide against her. Dowse took the trouble to come out with Challong in a little prow that they had,—all bamboos and leakage,—and he lay in the fairway waving a palm branch, and, so he told me, wondering why and what for he was making this fool of himself. Up come the Two-streak boat, and Dowse shouts: "Don't you come this way again, making my head all streaky! Go round by Ombay, and leave me alone." Some one looks over the port bulwarks

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and shies a banana at Dowse, and that's all. Dowse sits down in the bottom of the boat and cries fit to break his heart. Then he says, "Challong, what am I a-crying for?" and they fetches up by the Wurlee Light on the half-flood.

"Challong," he says, "there's too much traffic here, and that's why the water's so streaky as it is. It's the junks and the brigs and the steamers that do it," he says; and all the time he was speaking he was thinking, "Lord, Lord, what a crazy fool I am!" Challong said nothing, because he couldn't speak a word of English except say "dam," and he said that where you or me would say "yes." Dowse lay down on the planking of the Light with his eye to the crack, and he saw the muddy water streaking below, and he never said a word till slack water, because the streaks kept him tongue-tied at such times. At slack water he says, "Challong, we must buoy this fairway for wrecks," and he holds up his hands several times, showing that dozens of wrecks had come about in the fairway; and Challong says, "Dam."

'That very afternoon he and Challong rows to Wurlee, the village in the woods that the Light was named after, and buys canes,—stacks and stacks of canes, and coir rope thick and fine, all sorts,—and they sets to work making square floats by lashing of the canes together. Dowse said he

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took longer over those floats than might have been needed, because he rejoiced in the corners, they being square, and the streaks in his head all running longways. He lashed the canes together, criss-cross and thwartways,—any way but longways,—and they made up twelve-foot-square floats, like rafts. Then he stepped a twelve-foot bamboo or a bundle of canes in the centre, and to the head of that he lashed a big six-foot W letter, all made of canes, and painted the float dark green and the W white, as a wreck-buoy should be painted. Between them two they makes a round dozen of these new kind of wreck-buoys, and it was a two months' job. There was no big traffic, owing to it being on the turn of the monsoon, but what there was Dowse cursed at, and the streaks in his head, they ran with the tides, as usual.

‘Day after day, so soon as a buoy was ready, Challong would take it out, with a big rock that half sunk the prow and a bamboo grapnel, and drop it dead in the fairway. He did this day or night, and Dowse could see him of a clear night, when the sea brimed, climbing about the buoys with the sea-fire dripping off him. They was all put into place, twelve of them, in seventeen-fathom water; not in a straight line, on account of a well-known shoal there, but slantways, and two, one behind the other, mostly in the centre of the

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fairway. You must keep the centre of those Javva currents, for currents at the side is different, and in narrow water, before you can turn a spoke, you get your nose took round and rubbed upon the rocks and the woods. Dowse knew that just as well as any skipper. Likeways he knew that no skipper daren't run through uncharted wrecks in a six-knot current. He told me he used to lie outside the Light watching his buoys ducking and dipping so friendly with the tide; and the motion was comforting to him on account of its being different from the run of the streaks in his head.

‘Three weeks after he’d done his business up comes a steamer through Loby Toby Straits, thinking she’d run into Flores Sea before night. He saw her slow down; then she backed. Then one man and another come up on the bridge, and he could see there was a regular powwow, and the flood was driving her right on to Dowse’s wreck-buoys. After that she spun round and went back south, and Dowse nearly killed himself with laughing. But a few weeks after that a couple of junks came shouldering through from the north, arm in arm, like junks go. It takes a good deal to make a Chinaman understand danger. They junks set well in the current, and went down the fairway, right among the buoys, ten knots an hour, blowing horns and banging tin pots all the time. That

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made Dowse very angry; he having taken so much trouble to stop the fairway. No boats run Flores Straits by night, but it seemed to Dowse that if junks 'd do that in the day, the Lord knew but what a steamer might trip over his buoys at night; and he sent Challong to run a coir rope between three of the buoys in the middle of the fairway, and he fixed naked lights of coir steeped in oil to that rope. The tides was the only things that moved in those seas, for the airs was dead still till they began to blow, and *then* they would blow your hair off. Challong tended those lights every night after the junks had been so impudent, —four lights in about a quarter of a mile hung up in iron skillets on the rope; and when they was alight,—and coir burns well, very like a lamp wick, —the fairway seemed more madder than anything else in the world. First there was the Wurlee Light, then these four queer lights, that couldn't be riding-lights, almost flush with the water, and behind them, twenty mile off, but the biggest light of all, there was the red top of old Loby Toby volcano. Dowse told me that he used to go out in the prow and look at his handiwork, and it made him scared, being like no lights that ever was fixed.

‘By and by some more steamers came along, snorting and sniffing at the buoys, but never going through, and Dowse says to himself: “Thank

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goodness I've taught them not to come streaking through my water. Ombay Passage is good enough for them and the like of them." But he didn't remember how quick that sort of news spreads among the shipping. Every steamer that fetched up by those buoys told another steamer and all the port officers concerned in those seas that there was something wrong with Flores Straits that hadn't been charted yet. It was block-buoyed for wrecks in the fairway, they said, and no sort of passage to use. Well, the Dutch, of course they didn't know anything about it. They thought our Admiralty Survey had been there, and they thought it very queer but neighbourly. You understand us English are always looking up marks and lighting sea-ways all the world over, never asking with your leave or by your leave, seeing that the sea concerns us more than any one else. So the news went to and back from Flores to Bali, and Bali to Probolingo, where the railway is that runs to Batavia. All through the Javva seas everybody got the word to keep clear o' Flores Straits, and Dowse, he was left alone except for such steamers and small craft as didn't know. They'd come up and look at the straits like a bull over a gate, but those nodding wreck-buoys scared them away. By and by the Admiralty Survey ship—the *Britomarte* I think she was—lay in Macassar Roads

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off Fort Rotterdam, alongside of the *Amboina*, a dirty little Dutch gunboat that used to clean there; and the Dutch captain says to our captain, "What's wrong with Flores Straits?" he says.

"Blowed if I know," says our captain, who'd just come up from the Angelica Shoal.

"Then why did you go and buoy it?" says the Dutchman.

"Blowed if I have," says our captain. "That's your lookout."

"Buoyed it is," says the Dutch captain, "according to what they tell me; and a whole fleet of wreck-buoys, too."

"Gummy!" says our captain. "It's a dorg's life at sea, any way. I must have a look at this. You come along after me as soon as you can"; and down he skimmed that very night, round the heel of Celebes, three days' steam to Flores Head, and he met a Two-streak liner, very angry, backing out of the head of the strait; and the merchant captain gave our Survey ship something of his mind for leaving wrecks uncharted in those narrow waters and wasting his company's coal.

"It's no fault o' mine," says our captain.

"I don't care whose fault it is," says the merchant captain, who had come aboard to speak to him just at dusk. "The fairway's choked with wreck enough to knock a hole through a

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dock-gate. I saw their big ugly masts sticking up just under my forefoot. Lord ha' mercy on us!" he says, spinning round. "The place is like Regent Street of a hot summer night."

'And so it was. They two looked at Flores Straits, and they saw lights one after the other stringing across the fairway. Dowse, he had seen the steamers hanging there before dark, and he said to Challong: "We'll give 'em something to remember. Get all the skillets and iron pots you can and hang them up alongside o' the regular four lights. We must teach 'em to go round by the Ombay Passage, or they'll be streaking up our water again!"' Challong took a header off the lighthouse, got aboard the little leaking prow, with his coir soaked in oil and all the skillets he could muster, and he began to show his lights, four regulation ones and half-a-dozen new lights hung on that rope which was a little above the water. Then he went to all the spare buoys with all his spare coir, and hung a skillet-flare on every pole that he could get at,—about seven poles. So you see, taking one with another, there was the Wurlee Light, four lights on the rope between the three centre fairway wreck-buoys that was hung out as a usual custom, six or eight extry ones that Challong had hung up on the same rope, and seven dancing flares that belonged to seven

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wreck-buoys,—eighteen or twenty lights in all crowded into a mile of seventeen-fathom water, where no tide 'd ever let a wreck rest for three weeks, let alone ten or twelve wrecks, as the flares showed.

‘The Admiralty captain, he saw the lights come out one after another, same as the merchant skipper did who was standing at his side, and he said:—

“‘There’s been an international cata-strophe here or elseways,” and then he whistled. “I’m going to stand on and off all night till the Dutchman comes,” he says.

“‘I’m off,” says the merchant skipper. “My owners don’t wish for me to watch illuminations. That strait’s choked with wreck, and I shouldn’t wonder if a typhoon hadn’t driven half the junks o’ China there.” With that he went away; but the Survey ship, she stayed all night at the head o’ Flores Strait, and the men admired of the lights till the lights was burning out, and then they admired more than ever.

‘A little bit before morning the Dutch gunboat come flustering up, and the two ships stood together watching the lights burn out and out, till there was nothing left ’cept Flores Straits, all green and wet, and a dozen wreck-buoys, and Wurlee Light.

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‘Dowse had slept very quiet that night, and got rid of his streaks by means of thinking of the angry steamers outside. Challong was busy, and didn’t come back to his bunk till late. In the gray early morning Dowse looked out to sea, being, as he said, in torment, and saw all the navies of the world riding outside Flores Strait fairway in a half-moon, seven miles from wing to wing, most wonderful to behold. Those were the words he used to me time and again in telling the tale.

‘Then, he says, he heard a gun fired with a most tremenjus explosion, and all them great navies crumbled to little pieces of clouds, and there was only two ships remaining, and a man-o’-war’s boat rowing to the Light, with the oars going sideways instead o’ longways as the morning tides, ebb or flow, would continually run.

“‘What the devil’s wrong with this strait?’” says a man in the boat as soon as they was in hailing distance. “Has the whole English Navy sunk here, or what?”

“‘There’s nothing wrong,’ says Dowse, sitting on the platform outside the Light, and keeping one eye very watchful on the streakiness of the tide, which he always hated, ‘specially in the mornings. “You leave me alone and I’ll leave you alone. Go round by the Ombay Passage, and don’t cut up my water. You’re making it

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streaky." All the time he was saying that he kept on thinking to himself, "Now that's foolishness,—now that's nothing but foolishness"; and all the time he was holding tight to the edge of the platform in case the streakiness of the tide should carry him away.

'Somebody answers from the boat, very soft and quiet, "We're going round by Ombay in a minute, if you'll just come and speak to our captain and give him his bearings."

'Dowse, he felt very highly flattered, and he slipped into the boat, not paying any attention to Challong. But Challong swum along to the ship after the boat. When Dowse was in the boat, he found, so he says, he couldn't speak to the sailors 'cept to call them "white mice with chains about their neck," and Lord knows he hadn't seen or thought o' white mice since he was a little bit of a boy with them in his hankerchief. So he kept himself quiet, and so they come to the Survey ship; and the man in the boat hails the quarter-deck with something that Dowse could not rightly understand, but there was one word he spelt out again and again,—m-a-d, mad,—and he heard some one behind him saying of it backwards. So he had two words,—m-a-d, mad, d-a-m, dam; and he put they two words together as he come on the quarter-deck, and he says to the captain

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very slowly, "I be damned if I am mad," but all the time his eye was held like by the coils of rope on the belaying pins, and he followed those ropes up and up with his eye till he was quite lost and comfortable among the rigging, which ran criss-cross, and slopeways, and up and down, and any way but straight along under his feet north and south. The deck-seams, they ran *that* way, and Dowse daresn't look at them. They was the same as the streaks of the water under the planking of the lighthouse.

'Then he heard the captain talking to him very kind, and for the life of him he couldn't tell why ; and what he wanted to tell the captain was that Flores Strait was too streaky, like bacon, and the steamers only made it worse ; but all he could do was to keep his eye very careful on the rigging and sing :—

"I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea ;
And oh, it was all lading
With pretty things for me !"

Then he remembered that was foolishness, and he started off to say about the Ombay Passage, but all he said was : "The captain was a duck,—meaning no offence to you, sir,—but there was something on his back that I've forgotten.

"And when the ship began to move
The captain says, 'Quack-quack !'"

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‘He notices the captain turns very red and angry, and he says to himself, “My foolish tongue’s run away with me again. I’ll go forward”; and he went forward, and catched the reflection of himself in the binnacle brasses; and he saw that he was standing there and talking mother-naked in front of all them sailors, and he ran into the fo’c’s’le howling most grievous. He must ha’ gone naked for weeks on the Light, and Challong o’ course never noticed it. Challong was swimmin’ round and round the ship, sayin’ “dam” for to please the men and to be took aboard, because he didn’t know any better.

‘Dowse didn’t tell what happened after this, but seemingly our Survey ship lowered two boats and went over to Dowse’s buoys. They took one sounding, and then finding it was all correct they cut the buoys that Dowse and Challong had made, and let the tide carry ‘em out through the Loby Toby end of the strait; and the Dutch gunboat, she sent two men ashore to take care o’ the Wurlee Light, and the *Britomarte*, she went away with Dowse, leaving Challong to try to follow them, a - calling “dam—dam” all among the wake of the screw, and half heaving himself out of water and joining his webby-foot hands together. He dropped astern in five minutes, and I suppose he went back to the Wurlee Light.

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You can't drown an Orange-Lord, not even in Flores Strait on flood-tide.

‘Dowse come across me when he came to England with the Survey ship, after being more than six months in her, and cured of his streaks by working hard and not looking over the side more than he could help. He told me what I’ve told you, sir, and he was very much ashamed of himself; but the trouble on his mind was to know whether he hadn’t sent something or other to the bottom with his buoyings and his lightings and such like. He put it to me many times, and each time more and more sure he was that something had happened in the straits because of him. I think that distrusted him, because I found him up at Fratton one day, in a red jersey, a-praying before the Salvation Army, which had produced him in their papers as a Reformed Pirate. They knew from his mouth that he had committed evil on the deep waters,—that was what he told them,—and piracy, which no one does now except Chineses, was all they knew of. I says to him: “Dowse, don’t be a fool. Take off that jersey and come along with me.” He says: “Fenwick, I’m a-saving of my soul; for I do believe that I have killed more men in Flores Strait than Trafalgar.” I says: “A man that thought he’d seen all the navies of the earth standing round in a ring to

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watch his foolish false wreck-buoys" (those was my very words I used) "ain't fit to have a soul, and if he did he couldn't kill a louse with it. John Dowse, you was mad then, but you are a damn sight madder now. Take off that there jersey!"

'He took it off and come along with me, but he never got rid o' that suspicion that he'd sunk some ships a-cause of his foolishnesses at Flores Straits; and now he's a wherryman from Portsmouth to Gosport, where the tides run crossways and you can't row straight for ten strokes together. . . . So late as all this! Look!'

Fenwick left his chair, passed to the Light, touched something that clicked, and the glare ceased with a suddenness that was pain. Day had come, and the Channel needed St. Cecilia no longer. The sea-fog rolled back from the cliffs in trailed wreaths and dragged patches, as the sun rose and made the dead sea alive and splendid. The stillness of the morning held us both silent as we stepped on the balcony. A lark went up from the cliffs behind St. Cecilia, and we smelt a smell of cows in the lighthouse pastures below.

Then we were both at liberty to thank the Lord for another day of clean and wholesome life.

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Life liveth but in life, and doth not roam
To other lands if all be well at home :
'Solid as ocean foam,' quoth ocean foam.

THE room was blue with the smoke of three pipes and a cigar. The leave-season had opened in India, and the firstfruits on this side of the water were 'Tick' Boileau, of the 45th Bengal Cavalry, who called on me, after three years' absence, to discuss old things which had happened. Fate, who always does her work handsomely, sent up the same staircase within the same hour The Infant, fresh from Upper Burma, and he and Boileau looking out of my window saw walking in the street one Nevin, late in a Gurkha regiment which had been through the Black Mountain Expedition. They yelled to him to come up, and the whole street was aware that they desired him to come up, and he came up, and

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there followed Pandemonium in my room because we had foregathered from the ends of the earth, and three of us were on a holiday, and none of us were twenty-five, and all the delights of all London lay waiting our pleasure.

Boileau took the only other chair, The Infant, by right of his bulk, the sofa; and Nevin, being a little man, sat cross-legged on the top of the revolving bookcase, and we all said, 'Who'd ha' thought it!' and 'What are you doing here?' till speculation was exhausted and the talk went over to inevitable 'shop.' Boileau was full of a great scheme for winning a military *attaché*-ship at St. Petersburg; Nevin had hopes of the Staff College, and The Infant had been moving heaven and earth and the Horse Guards for a commission in the Egyptian army.

'What's the use o' that?' said Nevin, twirling round on the bookcase.

'Oh, heaps! 'Course, if you get stuck with a Fellah-ien regiment, you're sold; but if you are appointed to a Soudanese lot, you're in clover. They are first-class fighting-men—and just think of the eligible central position of Egypt in the next row.'

This was putting the match to a magazine. We all began to explain the Central Asian question off-hand, flinging army corps from the Helmund

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to Kashmir with more than Russian recklessness. Each of the boys made for himself a war to his own liking, and when we had settled all the details of Armageddon, killed all our senior officers, handled a division apiece, and nearly torn the Atlas in two in attempts to explain our theories, Boileau needs must lift up his voice above the clamour, and cry, 'Anyhow it'll be the Hell of a row!' in tones that carried conviction far down the staircase.

Entered, unperceived in the smoke, William the Silent. 'Gen'elman to see you, sir,' said he, and disappeared, leaving in his stead none other than Mr. Eustace Cleever. William would have introduced the Dragon of Wantley with equal disregard of present company.

'I—I beg your pardon. I didn't know that there was anybody—with you. I—'

But it was not seemly to allow Mr. Cleever to depart: he was a great man. The boys remained where they were, for any movement would have choked up the little room. Only when they saw his gray hairs they stood on their feet, and when The Infant caught the name, he said:

'Are you—did you write that book called *As it was in the Beginning?*'

Mr. Cleever admitted that he had written the book.

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‘Then—then I don’t know how to thank you, sir,’ said The Infant, flushing pink. ‘I was brought up in the country you wrote about—all my people live there; and I read the book in camp on the Hlinedatalone, and I knew every stick and stone, and the dialect too; and, by Jove! it was just like being at home and hearing the country-people talk. Nevin, you know *As it was in the Beginning?* So does Ti—Boileau.’

Mr. Cleever has tasted as much praise, public and private, as one man may safely swallow; but it seemed to me that the out-spoken admiration in The Infant’s eyes and the little stir in the little company came home to him very nearly indeed.

‘Won’t you take the sofa?’ said The Infant. ‘I’ll sit on Boileau’s chair, and——’ here he looked at me to spur me to my duties as a host; but I was watching the novelist’s face. Cleever had not the least intention of going away, but settled himself on the sofa.

Following the first great law of the Army, which says ‘all property is common except money, and you’ve only got to ask the next man for that,’ The Infant offered tobacco and drink. It was the least he could do; but not the most lavish praise in the world held half as much appreciation and reverence as The Infant’s simple ‘Say when, sir,’ above the long glass.

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Cleever said 'when,' and more thereto, for he was a golden talker, and he sat in the midst of hero-worship devoid of all taint of self-interest. The boys asked him of the birth of his book and whether it was hard to write, and how his notions came to him ; and he answered with the same absolute simplicity as he was questioned. His big eyes twinkled, he dug his long thin hands into his gray beard and tugged it as he grew animated. He dropped little by little from the peculiar pinching of the broader vowels—the indefinable 'Euh,' that runs through the speech of the pundit caste—and the elaborate choice of words, to freely-mouthing 'ows' and 'ois,' and, for him at least, unfettered colloquialisms. He could not altogether understand the boys, who hung upon his words so reverently. The line of the chin-strap, that still showed white and untanned on cheek-bone and jaw, the steadfast young eyes puckered at the corners of the lids with much staring through red-hot sunshine, the slow, untroubled breathing, and the curious, crisp, curt speech seemed to puzzle him equally. He could create men and women, and send them to the uttermost ends of the earth, to help delight and comfort ; he knew every mood of the fields, and could interpret them to the cities, and he knew the hearts of many in city and the country, but he had hardly, in forty years,

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come into contact with the thing which is called a Subaltern of the Line. He told the boys this in his own way.

‘Well, how should you?’ said The Infant. ‘You—you’re quite different, y’ see, sir.’

The Infant expressed his ideas in his tone rather than his words, but Cleever understood the compliment.

‘We’re only Subs,’ said Nevin, ‘and we aren’t exactly the sort of men you’d meet much in your life, I s’pose.’

‘That’s true,’ said Cleever. ‘I live chiefly among men who write, and paint, and sculp, and so forth. We have our own talk and our own interests, and the outer world doesn’t trouble us much.’

‘That must be awfully jolly,’ said Boileau, at a venture. ‘We have our own shop, too, but ’tisn’t half as interesting as yours, of course. You know all the men who’ve ever done anything; and we only knock about from place to place, and we do nothing.’

‘The Army’s a very lazy profession if you choose to make it so,’ said Nevin. ‘When there’s nothing going on, there is nothing going on, and you lie up.’

‘Or try to get a billet somewhere, to be ready for the next show,’ said The Infant with a chuckle.

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‘To me,’ said Cleever softly, ‘the whole idea of warfare seems so foreign and unnatural, so essentially vulgar, if I may say so, that I can hardly appreciate your sensations. Of course, though, any change from life in garrison towns must be a godsend to you.’

Like many home-staying Englishmen, Cleever believed that the newspaper phrase he quoted covered the whole duty of the Army whose toils enabled him to enjoy his many-sided life in peace. The remark was not a happy one, for Boileau had just come off the Frontier, The Infant had been on the warpath for nearly eighteen months, and the little red man Nevin two months before had been sleeping under the stars at the peril of his life. But none of them tried to explain, till I ventured to point out that they had all seen service and were not used to idling. Cleever took in the idea slowly.

‘Seen service?’ said he. Then, as a child might ask, ‘Tell me. Tell me everything about everything.’

‘How do you mean?’ said The Infant, delighted at being directly appealed to by the great man.

‘Good Heavens! How am I to make you understand if you can’t see. In the first place, what is your age?’

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‘Twenty-three next July,’ said The Infant promptly.

Cleever questioned the others with his eyes.

‘I’m twenty-four,’ said Nevin.

‘And I’m twenty-two,’ said Boileau.

‘And you’ve all seen service?’

‘We’ve all knocked about a little bit, sir, but The Infant’s the war-worn veteran. He’s had two years’ work in Upper Burma,’ said Nevin.

‘When you say work, what do you mean, you extraordinary creatures?’

‘Explain it, Infant,’ said Nevin.

‘Oh, keeping things in order generally, and running about after little *dakus*—that’s dacoits—and so on. There’s nothing to explain.’

‘Make that young Leviathan speak,’ said Cleever impatiently, above his glass.

‘How can he speak?’ said I. ‘He’s done the work. The two don’t go together. But, Infant, you’re ordered to *bukh*.’

‘What about? I’ll try.’

‘*Bukh* about a *daur*. You’ve been on heaps of ‘em,’ said Nevin.

‘What in the world does that mean? Has the Army a language of its own?’

The Infant turned very red. He was afraid he was being laughed at, and he detested talking

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before outsiders ; but it was the author of *As it was in the Beginning* who waited.

‘It’s all so new to me,’ pleaded Cleever ; ‘and—and you said you liked my book.’

This was a direct appeal that The Infant could understand, and he began rather flurriedly, with much slang bred of nervousness—

‘Pull me up, sir, if I say anything you don’t follow. About six months before I took my leave out of Burma, I was on the Hlinedatalone, up near the Shan States, with sixty Tommies—private soldiers, that is—and another subaltern, a year senior to me. The Burmese business was a subaltern’s war, and our forces were split up into little detachments, all running about the country and trying to keep the dacoits quiet. The dacoits were having a first-class time, y’ know—filling women up with kerosine and setting ’em alight, and burning villages, and crucifying people.’

The wonder in Eustace Cleever’s eyes deepened. He could not quite realise that the cross still existed in any form.

‘Have you ever seen a crucifixion ?’ said he.

‘Of course not. ’Shouldn’t have allowed it if I had ; but I’ve seen the corpses. The dacoits had a trick of sending a crucified corpse down the river on a raft, just to show they were keeping

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their tail up and enjoying themselves. Well, that was the kind of people I had to deal with.'

'Alone?' said Cleever. Solitude of the soul he could understand—none better—but he had never in the body moved ten miles from his fellows.

'I had my men, but the rest of it was pretty much alone. The nearest post that could give me orders was fifteen miles away, and we used to heliograph to them, and they used to give us orders same way—too many orders.'

'Who was your C. O.?' said Boileau.

'Bounderby — Major. *Pukka* Bounderby; more Bounder than *pukka*. He went out up Bhamo way. Shot, or cut down, last year,' said The Infant.

'What are these interludes in a strange tongue?' said Cleever to me.

'Professional information—like the Mississippi pilots' talk,' said I. 'He did not approve of his major, who died a violent death. Go on, Infant.'

'Far too many orders. You couldn't take the Tommies out for a two days' *daur*—that's expedition—without being blown up for not asking leave. And the whole country was humming with dacoits. I used to send out spies, and act on their information. As soon as a man came in and told me of a gang in hiding, I'd take thirty men with some grub, and go out and look for

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them, while the other subaltern lay doggo in camp.'

'Lay! Pardon me, but *how* did he lie?' said Cleever.

'Lay doggo—lay quiet, with the other thirty men. When I came back, he'd take out his half of the men, and have a good time of his own.'

'Who was he?' said Boileau.

'Carter-Deecey, of the Aurungabadis. Good chap, but too *zubberdusty*, and went *bokhar* four days out of seven. He's gone out, too. Don't interrupt a man.'

Cleever looked helplessly at me.

'The other subaltern,' I translated swiftly, 'came from a native regiment, and was overbearing in his demeanour. He suffered much from the fever of the country, and is now dead. Go on, Infant.'

'After a bit we got into trouble for using the men on frivolous occasions, and so I used to put my signaller under arrest to prevent him reading the helio-orders. Then I'd go out and leave a message to be sent an hour after I got clear of the camp, something like this: "Received important information; start in an hour unless countermanded." If I was ordered back, it didn't much matter. I swore the C. O.'s watch was wrong, or something, when I came back. The Tommies

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enjoyed the fun, and—Oh, yes, there was one Tommy who was the bard of the detachment. He used to make up verses on everything that happened.'

‘What sort of verses?’ said Cleever.

‘Lovely verses; and the Tommies used to sing ‘em. There was one song with a chorus, and it said something like this.’ The Infant dropped into the true barrack-room twang:

‘Theebaw, the Burma king, did a very foolish thing,
When ‘e mustered ‘ostile forces in ar-rai,
‘E little thought that *we*, from far across the sea,
Would send our armies up to Mandalai! ’

‘O gorgeous!’ said Cleever. ‘And how magnificently direct! The notion of a regimental bard is new to me, but of course it must be so.’

‘He was awf’ly popular with the men,’ said The Infant. ‘He had them all down in rhyme as soon as ever they had done anything. He was a great bard. He was always ready with an elegy when we picked up a Boh—that’s a leader of dacoits.’

‘How did you pick him up?’ said Cleever.

‘Oh! shot him if he wouldn’t surrender.’

‘You! Have you shot a man?’

There was a subdued chuckle from all three boys, and it dawned on the questioner that one experience in life which was denied to himself, and

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he weighed the souls of men in a balance, had been shared by three very young gentlemen of engaging appearance. He turned round on Nevin, who had climbed to the top of the bookcase, and was sitting cross-legged as before.

‘And have you, too?’

‘Think so,’ said Nevin sweetly. ‘In the Black Mountain. He was rolling cliffs on to my half-company, and spoiling our formation. I took a rifle from a man, and brought him down at the second shot.’

‘Good heavens! And how did you feel afterwards?’

‘Thirsty. I wanted a smoke, too.

Cleever looked at Boileau — the youngest. Surely his hands were guiltless of blood.

Boileau shook his head and laughed. ‘Go on, Infant,’ said he.

‘And you too?’ said Cleever.

‘Fancy so. It was a case of cut, cut or be cut, with me; so I cut—One. I couldn’t do any more, sir.’

Cleever looked as though he would like to ask many questions, but The Infant swept on, in the full tide of his tale.

‘Well, we were called insubordinate young whelps at last, and strictly forbidden to take the Tommies out any more without orders. I wasn’t

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sorry, because Tommy is such an exacting sort of creature. He wants to live as though he were in barracks all the time. I was grubbing on fowls and boiled corn, but my Tommies wanted their pound of fresh meat, and their half ounce of this, and their two ounces of t'other thing, and they used to come to me and badger me for plug-tobacco when we were four days in jungle. I said: "I can get you Burma tobacco, but I don't keep a canteen up my sleeve." They couldn't see it. They wanted all the luxuries of the season, confound 'em.'

'You were alone when you were dealing with these men?' said Cleever, watching The Infant's face under the palm of his hand. He was getting new ideas, and they seemed to trouble him.

'Of course, unless you count the mosquitoes. They were nearly as big as the men. After I had to lie doggo I began to look for something to do; and I was great pals with a man called Hicksey in the Police, the best man that ever stepped on earth; a first-class man.'

Cleever nodded applause. He knew how to appreciate enthusiasm.

'Hicksey and I were as thick as thieves. He had some Burma mounted police—rummy chaps, armed with sword and snider carbine. They rode punchy Burma ponies with string stirrups, red

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cloth saddles, and red bell-rope head-stalls. Hicksey used to lend me six or eight of them when I asked him—nippy little devils, keen as mustard. But they told their wives too much, and all my plans got known, till I learned to give false marching orders overnight, and take the men to quite a different village in the morning. Then we used to catch the simple *daku* before breakfast, and made him very sick. It's a ghastly country on the Hlinedatalone; all bamboo jungle, with paths about four feet wide winding through it. The *dakus* knew all the paths, and potted at us as we came round a corner; but the mounted police knew the paths as well as the *dakus*, and we used to go stalking 'em in and out. Once we flushed 'em, the men on the ponies had the advantage of the men on foot. We held all the country absolutely quiet, for ten miles round, in about a month. Then we took Boh Na-ghee, Hicksey and I and the Civil officer. That was a lark!'

'I think I am beginning to understand a little,' said Cleever. 'It was a pleasure to you to administer and fight?'

'Rather! There's nothing nicer than a satisfactory little expedition, when you find your plans fit together, and your conformation's *teek*—correct, you know, and the whole *sub-chiz*—I mean, when everything works out like formulæ on a black-

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board. Hicksey had all the information about the Boh. He had been burning villages and murdering people right and left, and cutting up Government convoys and all that. He was lying doggo in a village about fifteen miles off, waiting to get a fresh gang together. So we arranged to take thirty mounted police, and turn him out before he could plunder into our newly-settled villages. At the last minute, the Civil officer in our part of the world thought he'd assist at the performance.'

'Who was he?' said Nevin.

'His name was Dennis,' said The Infant slowly. 'And we'll let it stay so. He's a better man now than he was then.'

'But how old was the Civil power?' said Cleever. 'The situation is developing itself.'

'He was about six-and-twenty, and he was awf'ly clever. He knew a lot of things, but I don't think he was quite steady enough for dacoit-hunting. We started overnight for Boh Na-ghee's village, and we got there just before morning, without raising an alarm. Dennis had turned out armed to his teeth—two revolvers, a carbine, and all sorts of things. I was talking to Hicksey about posting the men, and Dennis edged his pony in between us, and said, "What shall I do? What shall I do? Tell me what to do, you fellows." We didn't take much notice; but his

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pony tried to bite me in the leg, and I said, "Pull out a bit, old man, till we've settled the attack." He kept edging in, and fiddling with his reins and his revolvers, and saying, "Dear me! Dear me! Oh, dear me! What do you think I'd better do?" The man was in a deadly funk, and his teeth were chattering.'

'I sympathise with the Civil power,' said Cleever. 'Continue, young Clive.'

'The fun of it was, that he was supposed to be our superior officer. Hicksey took a good look at him, and told him to attach himself to my party. 'Beastly mean of Hicksey, that. The chap kept on edging in and bothering, instead of asking for some men and taking up his own position, till I got angry, and the carbines began popping on the other side of the village. Then I said, "For God's sake be quiet, and sit down where you are! If you see anybody come out of the village, shoot at him." I knew he couldn't hit a hayrick at a yard. Then I took my men over the garden wall—over the palisades, y' know—somehow or other, and the fun began. Hicksey had found the Boh in bed under a mosquito-curtain, and he had taken a flying jump on to him.'

'A flying jump!' said Cleever. 'Is *that* also war?'

'Yes,' said The Infant, now thoroughly warmed.

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‘Don’t you know how you take a flying jump on to a fellow’s head at school, when he snores in the dormitory? The Boh was sleeping in a bedful of swords and pistols, and Hicksey came down like Zazel through the netting, and the net got mixed up with the pistols and the Boh and Hicksey, and they all rolled on the floor together. I laughed till I couldn’t stand, and Hicksey was cursing me for not helping him; so I left him to fight it out and went into the village. Our men were slashing about and firing, and so were the dacoits, and in the thick of the mess some ass set fire to a house, and we all had to clear out. I froze on to the nearest *daku* and ran to the palisade, shoving him in front of me. He wriggled loose, and bounded over the other side. I came after him; but when I had one leg one side and one leg the other of the palisade, I saw that the *daku* had fallen flat on Dennis’s head. That man had never moved from where I left him. They rolled on the ground together, and Dennis’s carbine went off and nearly shot me. The *daku* picked himself up and ran, and Dennis buzzed his carbine after him, and it caught him on the back of his head, and knocked him silly. You never saw anything so funny in your life. I doubled up on the top of the palisade and hung there, yelling with laughter. But Dennis began to weep like anything. “Oh, I’ve killed a

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man," he said. "I've killed a man, and I shall never know another peaceful hour in my life! Is he dead? Oh, is he dead? Good Lord, I've killed a man!" I came down and said, "Don't be a fool"; but he kept on shouting, "Is he dead?" till I could have kicked him. The *daku* was only knocked out of time with the carbine. He came to after a bit, and I said, "Are you hurt much?" He groaned and said "No." His chest was all cut with scrambling over the palisade. "The white man's gun didn't do that," he said, "I did that, and I knocked the white man over." Just like a Burman, wasn't it? But Dennis wouldn't be happy at any price. He said: "Tie up his wounds. He'll bleed to death. Oh, he'll bleed to death!" "Tie 'em up yourself," I said, "if you're so anxious." "I can't touch him," said Dennis, "but here's my shirt." He took off his shirt, and fixed the braces again over his bare shoulders. I ripped the shirt up, and bandaged the dacoit quite professionally. He was grinning at Dennis all the time; and Dennis's haversack was lying on the ground, bursting full of sandwiches. Greedy hog! I took some, and offered some to Dennis. "How can I eat?" he said. "How can you ask me to eat? His very blood is on your hands now, and you're eating *my* sandwiches!" "All right," I said; "I'll give 'em to the *daku*."

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So I did, and the little chap was quite pleased, and wolfed 'em down like one o'clock.'

Cleever brought his hand down on the table with a thump that made the empty glasses dance. 'That's Art!' he said. 'Flat, flagrant mechanism! Don't tell me that happened on the spot!'

The pupils of The Infant's eyes contracted to two pin-points. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, slowly and stiffly, 'but I am telling this thing *as it happened*.'

Cleever looked at him a moment. 'My fault entirely,' said he; 'I should have known. Please go on.'

'Hicksey came out of what was left of the village with his prisoners and captives, all neatly tied up. Boh Na-ghee was first, and one of the villagers, as soon as he found the old ruffian helpless, began kicking him quietly. The Boh stood it as long as he could, and then groaned, and we saw what was going on. Hicksey tied the villager up, and gave him a half-a-dozen, good, with a bamboo, to remind him to leave a prisoner alone. You should have seen the old Boh grin. Oh! but Hicksey was in a furious rage with everybody. He'd got a wipe over the elbow that had tickled up his funny-bone, and he was rabid with me for not having helped him with the Boh and the mosquito-net. I had to explain that I

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couldn't do anything. If you'd seen 'em both tangled up together on the floor in one kicking cocoon, you'd have laughed for a week. Hicksey swore that the only decent man of his acquaintance was the Boh, and all the way to camp Hicksey was talking to the Boh, and the Boh was complaining about the soreness of his bones. When we got back, and had had a bath, the Boh wanted to know when he was going to be hanged. Hicksey said he couldn't oblige him on the spot, but had to send him to Rangoon. The Boh went down on his knees, and reeled off a catalogue of his crimes—he ought to have been hanged seventeen times over, by his own confession—and implored Hicksey to settle the business out of hand. "If I'm sent to Rangoon," said he, "they'll keep me in jail all my life, and that is a death every time the sun gets up or the wind blows." But we had to send him to Rangoon, and, of course, he was let off down there, and given penal servitude for life. When I came to Rangoon I went over the jail—I had helped to fill it, y' know—and the old Boh was there, and he spotted me at once. He begged for some opium first, and I tried to get him some, but that was against the rules. Then he asked me to have his sentence changed to death, because he was afraid of being sent to the Andamans. I couldn't do

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that either, but I tried to cheer him, and told him how things were going up-country, and the last thing he said was—"Give my compliments to the fat white man who jumped on me. If I'd been awake I'd have killed him." I wrote that to Hicksey next mail, and—and that's all. I'm 'fraid I've been gassing awf'ly, sir.'

Cleever said nothing for a long time. The Infant looked uncomfortable. He feared that, misled by enthusiasm, he had filled up the novelist's time with unprofitable recital of trivial anecdotes.

Then said Cleever, 'I can't understand. Why should you have seen and done all these things before you have cut your wisdom-teeth?'

'Don't know,' said The Infant apologetically. 'I haven't seen much—only Burmese jungle.'

'And dead men, and war, and power, and responsibility,' said Cleever, under his breath. 'You won't have any sensations left at thirty, if you go on as you have done. But I want to hear more tales—more tales!' He seemed to forget that even subalterns might have engagements of their own.

'We're thinking of dining out somewhere—the lot of us—and going on to the Empire afterwards,' said Nevin, with hesitation. He did not like to ask Cleever to come too. The invitation might be regarded as perilously near to 'cheek.' And

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Cleever, anxious not to wag a gray beard unbidden among boys at large, said nothing on his side.

Boileau solved the little difficulty by blurting out: 'Won't you come too, sir?'

Cleever almost shouted 'Yes,' and while he was being helped into his coat, continued to murmur 'Good heavens!' at intervals in a way that the boys could not understand.

'I don't think I've been to the Empire in my life,' said he; 'but—what *is* my life after all? Let us go.'

They went out with Eustace Cleever, and I sulked at home because they had come to see me but had gone over to the better man; which was humiliating. They packed him into a cab with utmost reverence, for was he not the author of *As it was in the Beginning*, and a person in whose company it was an honour to go abroad? From all I gathered later, he had taken less interest in the performance before him than in their conversations, and they protested with emphasis that he was 'as good a man as they make.' 'Knew what a man was driving at almost before he said it; and yet he's so damned simple about things any man knows.' That was one of many comments.

At midnight they returned, announcing that they were 'highly respectable gondoliers,' and that oysters and stout were what they chiefly

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needed. The eminent novelist was still with them, and I think he was calling them by their shorter names. I am certain that he said he had been moving in worlds not realised, and that they had shown him the Empire in a new light.

Still sore at recent neglect, I answered shortly, 'Thank heaven we have within the land ten thousand as good as they,' and when he departed, asked him what he thought of things generally.

He replied with another quotation, to the effect that though singing was a remarkably fine performance, I was to be quite sure that few lips would be moved to song if they could find a sufficiency of kissing.

Whereby I understood that Eustace Cleever, decorator and colourman in words, was blaspheming his own Art, and would be sorry for this in the morning.

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

'Less you want your toes trod off you'd better get back at once,
For the bullocks are walkin' two by two,
The *byles* are walkin' two by two,
The bullocks are walkin' two by two,

An' the elephants bring the guns !

Ho ! Yuss !

Great—big—long—black forty-pounder guns :

Jiggery-jolty to and fro,

Each as big as a launch in tow—

Blind—dumb—broad-breeched beggars o' batterin' guns !

Barrack-Room Ballad.

TOUCHING the truth of this tale there need be no doubt at all, for it was told to me by Mulvaney at the back of the elephant-lines, one warm evening when we were taking the dogs out for exercise. The twelve Government elephants rocked at their pickets outside the big mud-walled stables (one arch, as wide as a bridge-arch, to each restless beast), and the *mahouts* were preparing the evening meal. Now and again some

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impatient youngster would smell the cooking flour-cakes and squeal; and the naked little children of the elephant-lines would strut down the row shouting and commanding silence, or, reaching up, would slap at the eager trunks. Then the elephants feigned to be deeply interested in pouring dust upon their heads, but, so soon as the children passed, the rocking, fidgeting, and muttering broke out again.

The sunset was dying, and the elephants heaved and swayed dead black against the one sheet of rose-red low down in the dusty gray sky. It was at the beginning of the hot weather, just after the troops had changed into their white clothes, so Mulvaney and Ortheris looked like ghosts walking through the dusk. Learoyd had gone off to another barrack to buy sulphur ointment for his last dog under suspicion of mange, and with delicacy had put his kennel into quarantine at the back of the furnace where they cremate the anthrax cases.

‘You wouldn’t like mange, little woman?’ said Ortheris, turning my terrier over on her fat white back with his foot. *‘You’re no end bloomin’ partic’lar, you are. ‘Oo wouldn’t take no notice o’ me t’other day ’cause she was goin’ ‘ome all alone in ’er dorg-cart, eh? Settin’ on the box-seat like a bloomin’ little tart, you was, Vicy. Now*

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you run along an' make them 'uttees 'oller. Sick 'em, Vicy, loo!

Elephants loathe little dogs. Vixen barked herself down the pickets, and in a minute all the elephants were kicking and squealing and clucking together.

'Oh, you soldier-men,' said a mahout angrily, 'call off your she-dog. She is frightening our elephant-folk.'

'Rummy beggars!' said Ortheris meditatively. 'Call 'em people, same as if they was. An' they are too. Not so bloomin' rummy when you come to think of it, neither.'

Vixen returned yapping to show that she could do it again if she liked, and established herself between Ortheris's knees, smiling a large smile at his lawful dogs who dared not fly at her.

'Seed the battery this mornin'?' said Ortheris. He meant the newly-arrived elephant-battery; otherwise he would have said simply 'guns.' Three elephants harnessed tandem go to each gun, and those who have not seen the big forty-pounders of position trundling along in the wake of their gigantic team have yet something to behold. The lead-elephant had behaved very badly on parade; had been cut loose, sent back to the lines in disgrace, and was at that hour squealing and lashing out with his trunk at the end of the line; a

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picture of blind, bound, bad temper. His mahout, standing clear of the flail-like blows, was trying to soothe him.

‘That’s the beggar that cut up on p’rade. ‘E’s *must*,’ said Ortheris pointing. ‘There’ll be murder in the lines soon, and then, per’aps, ‘e’ll get loose an’ we’ll ‘ave to be turned out to shoot ‘im, same as when one o’ they native king’s elephants *musted* last June. ‘Ope ‘e will.’

‘*Must* be sugared !’ said Mulvaney contemptuously from his resting-place on the pile of dried bedding. ‘He’s no more than in a powerful bad timper wid bein’ put upon. I’d lay my kit he’s new to the gun-team, an’ by natur’ he hates haulin’. Ask the mahout, sorr.’

I hailed the old white-bearded mahout who was lavishing pet words on his sulky red-eyed charge.

‘He is not *musth*,’ the man replied indignantly; ‘only his honour has been touched. Is an elephant an ox or a mule that he should tug at a trace? His strength is in his head—Peace, peace, my Lord! It was not *my* fault that they yoked thee this morning!—Only a low-caste elephant will pull a gun, and *he* is a Kumeria of the Doon. It cost a year and the life of a man to break him to burden. They of the Artillery put him in the gun-team because one of their base-born brutes

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had gone lame. No wonder that he was, and is wrath.'

'Rummy! Most unusual rum,' said Ortheris. 'Gawd, 'e is in a temper, though! S'pose 'e got loose!'

Mulvaney began to speak but checked himself, and I asked the mahout what would happen if the heel-chains broke.

'God knows, who made elephants,' he said simply. 'In his now state peradventure he might kill you three, or run at large till his rage abated. He would not kill me except he were *musth*. Then would he kill me before any one in the world, because he loves me. Such is the custom of the elephant-folk; and the custom of us mahout-people matches it for foolishness. We trust each our own elephant, till our own elephant kills us. Other castes trust women, but we the elephant-folk. I have seen men deal with enraged elephants and live; but never was man yet born of woman that met my lord the elephant in his *musth* and lived to tell of the taming. They are enough bold who meet him angry.'

I translated. Then said Terence: 'Ask the heathen if he iver saw a man tame an elephint,—anyways—a white man.'

'Once,' said the mahout, 'I saw a man astride of such a beast in the town of Cawnpore; a bare-

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headed man, a white man, beating it upon the head with a gun. It was said he was possessed of devils or drunk.'

'Is ut like, think you, he'd be doin' it sober?' said Mulvaney after interpretation, and the chained elephant roared.

'There's only one man top of earth that would be the partic'lar kind o' sorter bloomin' fool to do it!' said Ortheris. 'When was that, Mulvaney?'

'As the naygur sez, in Cawnpore; an' I was that fool—in the days av my youth. But it came about as naturil as wan thing leads to another,—me an' the elephint, and the elephint and me; an' the fight betune us was the most naturil av all.'

'That's just wot it would ha' been,' said Ortheris. 'Only you must ha' been more than usual full. You done one queer trick with an elephant that I know of, why didn't you never tell us the other one?'

'Bekase, unless you had heard the naygur here say what he has said spontaneous, you'd ha' called me for a liar, Stanley, my son, an' it would ha' bin my duty an' my delight to give you the father an' mother av a beltin'! There's only wan fault about you, little man, an' that's thinking you know all there is in the world, an' a little more. 'Tis a fault that has made away wid a few orf'cers

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I've served undher, not to spake av ivry man but two that I iver thried to make into a privit.'

'Ho!' said Ortheris with ruffled plumes, 'an' 'oo was your two bloomin' little Sir Garnets, eh?'

'Wan was mesilf,' said Mulvaney with a grin that darkness could not hide; 'an'—seein' that he's not here there's no harm speakin' av' him—t'other was Jock.'

'Jock's no more than a 'ayrick in trousies. 'E be'aves *like* one; an' 'e can't 'it one at a 'undred; 'e was born *on* one, an' s'welp me 'e'll die *under* one for not bein' able to say wot 'e wants in a Christian lingo,' said Ortheris, jumping up from the piled fodder only to be swept off his legs. Vixen leaped upon his stomach, and the other dogs followed and sat down there.

'I know what Jock is like,' I said. 'I want to hear about the elephant, though.'

'It's another o' Mulvaney's bloomin' panoramas,' said Ortheris, gasping under the dogs. "'Im an' Jock for the 'ole bloomin' British Army! You'll be sayin' you won Waterloo next,—you an' Jock. Garn!'

Neither of us thought it worth while to notice Ortheris. The big gun-elephant threshed and muttered in his chains, giving tongue now and again in crashing trumpet-peals, and to this accompaniment Terence went on: 'In the be-

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ginnin',' said he, 'me bein' what I was, there was a misunderstandin' wid my sergeant that was then. He put his spite on me for various reasons,—

The deep-set eyes twinkled above the glow of the pipe-bowl, and Ortheris grunted, 'Another petticoat!'

—'For various an' promiscuous reasons; an' the upshot av it was that he come into barracks wan afternoon whin' I was settlin' my cowlick before goin' walkin', called me a big baboon (which I was not), an' a demoralisin' beggar (which I was), an' bid me go on fatigue thin an' there, helpin' shift E. P. tents, fourteen av them from the rest-camps. At that, me bein' set on my walk—'

'Ah!' from under the dogs, "'e's a Mormon, Vic. Don't you 'ave nothin' to do with 'im, little dorg.'

—'Set on my walk, I tould him a few things that came up in my mind, an' wan thing led on to another, an' betune talkin' I made time for to hit the nose av him so that he'd be no Venus to any woman for a week to come. 'Twas a fine big nose, and well it paid for a little groomin'. Afther that I was so well pleased wid my handicraftfulness that I niver raised fist on the gyard that came to take me to Clink. A child might ha' led me along, for I knew old Kearney's nose was ruined. That

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summer the Ould Rig'ment did not use their own Clink, bekase the cholera was hangin' about there like mildew on wet boots, an' 'twas murdher to confine in ut. We borrowed the Clink that belonged to the Holy Christians (the rig'ment that has never seen service yet), and that lay a matther av a mile away, acrost two p'rade-grounds an' the main road, an' all the ladies av Cawnpore goin' out for their afternoon dhrive. So I moved in the best av society, my shadow dancin' along forinst me, an' the gyard as solemn as putty, the bracelets on my wrists, an' my heart full contint wid the notion av Kearney's pro—pro—probos-culum in a shling.

'In the middle av ut all I perceived a gunner-orf'cer in full rig'mentals perusin' down the road, hell-for-leather, wid his mouth open. He fetched wan woild despairin' look on the dog-kyarts an' the polite society av Cawnpore, an' thin he dived like a rabbit into a dhrain by the side av the road.

"“Bhoys,” sez I, “that orf'cer's dhrunk. 'Tis scand'lus. Let's take him to Clink too.”

‘The corp'ril of the gyard made a jump for me, unlocked my stringers, an' he sez: “If it comes to runnin', run for your life. If it doesn't, I'll trust your honour. Anyways,” sez he, “come to Clink whin you can.”

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‘Then I behild him runnin’ wan way, stuffin’ the bracelets in his pocket, they bein’ Gov’ment property, and the gyard runnin’ another, an’ all the dog-kyarts runnin’ all ways to wanst, an’ me alone lookin’ down the red bag av a mouth av an elephint forty-two feet high at the shoulder, tin feet wide, wid tusks as long as the Ochterlony Monumint. That was my first reconnaissance. Maybe he was not quite so contagious, nor quite so tall, but I didn’t stop to throw out pickets. Mother av Hiven, how I ran down the road! The baste began to inveshtigate the dhrain wid the gunner-orf’cer in ut; an’ that was the makin’ av me. I tripped over wan of the rifles that my gyard had discarded (onsoldierly blackguards they was!), and whin I got up I was facin’ t’other way about an’ the elephint was huntin’ for the gunner-orf’cer. I can see his big fat back yet. Excipt that he didn’t dig, he car’ied on for all the world like little Vixen here at a rat-hole. He put his head down (by my sowl he nearly stood on ut!) to shquint down the dhrain; thin he’d grunt, and run round to the other ind in case the orf’cer was gone out by the back door; an’ he’d shtuff his trunk down the flue an’ get ut filled wid mud, an’ blow ut out, an’ grunt, an’ swear! My troth, he swore all hiven down upon that orf’cer; an’ what a commissariat elephint had to do wid a gunner-

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orf'cer passed me. Me havin' nowhere to go except to Clink, I stud in the road wid the rifle, a Snider an' no amm'nition, philosophisin' upon the rear ind av the animal. All round me, miles and miles, there was howlin' desolation, for ivry human sowl wid two legs, or four for the matther av that, was ambuscadin', an' this ould rapparee stud on his head tuggin' and gruntin' above the dhrain, his tail stickin' up to the sky, an' he thryin' to thrumpet through three feet av road-sweepin's up his thrunk. Begad, 'twas wickud to behold!

'Subsequint he caught sight av me standin' alone in the wide, wide world lanin' on the rifle. That dishcomposed him, bekase he thought I was the gunner-orf'cer got out unbeknownst. He looked betune his feet at the dhrain, an' he looked at me, an' I sez to myself: "Terence, my son, you've been watchin' this Noah's ark too long. Run for your life!" Dear knows I wanted to tell him I was only a poor privit on my way to Clink, an' no orf'cer at all, at all; but he put his ears forward av his thick head, an' I rethreated down the road grippin' the rifle, my back as cowld as a tombstone, and the slack av my trousies, where I made sure he'd take hould, crawlin' wid, — wid invidjus apprehension.

'I might ha' run till I dhropped, bekase I was betune the two straight lines av the road, an' a

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man, or a thousand men for the matther av that, are the like av sheep in keepin' betune right an' left marks.'

'Same as canaries,' said Ortheris from the darkness. 'Draw a line on a bloomin' little board, put their bloomin' little beakses there; stay so for hever and hever, amen, they will. 'Seed a 'ole reg'ment, I 'ave, walk crabways along the edge of a two-foot water-cut 'stid o' thinkin' to cross it. Men is sheep—bloomin' sheep. Go on.'

'But I saw his shadow wid the tail av my eye,' continued the man of experiences, 'an' "Wheel," I sez, "Terence, wheel!" an' I wheeled. 'Tis truth that I cud hear the shparks flyin' from my heels; an' I shpun into the nearest compound, fetched wan jump from the gate to the veranda av the house, an' fell over a tribe of naygurs wid a half-caste boy at a desk, all manufacturin' harness. 'Twas Antonio's Carriage Emporium at Cawnpore. You know ut, sorr?

'Ould Grambags must ha' wheeled abreast wid me, for his trunk came lickin' into the veranda like a belt in a barrick-room row, before I was in the shop. The naygurs an' the half-caste boy howled an' wint out at the backdoor, an' I stud lone as Lot's wife among the harness. A powerful thirsty thing is harness, by reason av the smell to ut.

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‘I wint into the backroom, nobody bein’ there to invite, an’ I found a bottle av whisky and a goglet av wather. The first an’ the second dhrink I never noticed bein’ dhry, but the fourth an’ the fifth tuk good hould av me an’ I began to think scornful av elephints. “Take the upper ground in mance’vrin’, Terence,” I sez; “an’ you’ll be a gen’ral yet,” sez I. An’ wid that I wint up to the flat mud roof av the house an’ looked over the edge av the parapit, threadin’ delicate. Ould Barrel-belly was in the compound, walkin’ to an’ fro, pluckin’ a piece av grass here an’ a weed there, for all the world like our colonel that is now whin his wife’s given him a talkin’ down an’ he’s prom’nadin’ to ease his timper. His back was to me, an’ by the same token I hiccupped. He checked in his walk, wan ear forward like a deaf ould lady wid an ear-thrumpet, an’ his thrunk hild out in a kind av fore-reaching hook. Thin he wagged his ear sayin’, “Do my sinses deceive me?” as plain as print, an’ he recomminst promenadin’. You know Antonio’s compound? ’Twas as full thin as ’tis now av new kyarts and ould kyarts, an’ second-hand kyarts an’ kyarts for hire,—landos, an’ b’rooshes, an’ brooms, an’ wag’nettes av ivry description. Thin I hiccupped again, an’ he began to study the ground beneath him, his tail whistlin’ wid emotion. Thin he lapped

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his thrunk round the shaft av a wag'nette an' dhrew it out circumspectuous an' thoughtful. "He's not there," he sez, fumblin' in the cushions wid his thrunk. Thin I hiccupped again, an' wid that he lost his patience good an' all, same as this wan in the lines here.'

The gun-elephant was breaking into peal after peal of indignant trumpetings, to the disgust of the other animals who had finished their food and wished to drowse. Between the outcries we could hear him picking restlessly at his ankle ring.

'As I was sayin'," Mulvaney went on, 'he behaved dishgraceful. He let out wid his fore-fut like a steam-hammer, bein' convinced that I was in ambuscade adjacent; an' that wag'nette ran back among the other carriages like a field-gun in charge. Thin he hauled ut out again an' shuk ut, an' by nature it came all to little pieces. Afther that he went sheer damn, slam, dancin', lunatic, double-shuffle demented wid the whole of Antonio's shtock for the season. He kicked, an' he straddled, and he stamped, an' he pounded all at wanst, his big bald head bobbin' up an' down, solemn as a rigadoon. He tuk a new shiny broom an' kicked ut on wan corner, an' ut opened out like a blossomin' lily; an' he shtuck wan fool-foot through the flure av ut an' a wheel was shpinnin' on his tusk. At that he got scared, an' by this an'

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that he fair sat down plump among the carriages, an' they pricked 'im wid splinters till he was a boundin' pincushin. In the middle av the mess, whin the kyarts was climbin' wan on top av the other, an' rickochettin' off the mud walls, an' showin' their agility, wid him tearin' their wheels off, I heard the sound av distrestful wailin' on the housetops, an' the whole Antonio firm an' fam'ly was cursin' me an' him from the roof next door; me bekase I'd taken refuge wid them, and he bekase he was playin' shtep-dances wid the carriages av the aristocracy.

“Divart his attention,” sez Antonio, dancin' on the roof in his big white waistcoat. “Divart his attention,” he sez, “or I'll prosecute you.” An' the whole fam'ly shouts, “Hit him a kick, mister soldier.”

“He's divartin' himself,” I sez, for it was just the worth av a man's life to go down into the compound. But by way av makin' show I threw the whisky-bottle ('twas not full whin I came there) at him. He shpun round from what was left av the last kyart, an' shtuck his head into the veranda not three feet below me. Maybe 'twas the temptin'ness av his back or the whisky. Anyways, the next thing I knew was me, wid my hands full av mud an' mortar, all fours on his back, an' the Snider just slidin' off the slope av his

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head. I grabbed that an' scuffed on his neck, dhruv my knees undher his big flappin' ears, an' we wint to glory out av that compound wid a shqueal that crawled up my back an' down my belly. Thin I remimbered the Snider, an' I grup ut by the muzzle an' hit him on the head. 'Twas most forlorn—like tappin' the deck av a throop-ship wid a cane to stop the engines whin you're sea-sick. But I parsevered till I sweated, an' at last from takin' no notice at all he began to grunt. I hit wid the full strength that was in me in those days, an' it might ha' discommoded him. We came back to the p'rade-groun' forty miles an hour, trumpetin' vainglorious. I never stopped hammerin' him for a minut'; 'twas by way av divartin' him from runnin' undher the trees an' scrapin' me off like a poultice. The p'rade-groun' an' the road was all empty, but the throops was on the roofs av the barricks, an' betune Ould Thrajectory's gruntin' an' mine (for I was winded wid my stone-breakin'), I heard them clappin' an' cheerin'. He was growin' more confused an' tuk to runnin' in circles.

“Begad,” sez I to myself, “there’s dacency in all things, Terence. ‘Tis like you’ve shplit his head, and whin you come out av Clink you’ll be put under stoppages for killin’ a Gov’ment elephint.” At that I caressed him.’

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“ ‘Ow the devil did you do that? Might as well pat a barrick,’ said Ortheris.

‘Thried all manner av endearin’ epitaphs, but bein’ more than a little shuk up I disremimbered what the devil would answer to. So, “Good dog,” I sez; “Pretty puss,” sez I; “Whoa mare,” I sez; an’ at that I fetched him a shtroke av the butt for to conciliate him, an’ he stud still among the barricks.

“ Will no one take me off the top av this murderin’ volcano?” I sez at the top av my shout; an’ I heard a man yellin’, “Hould on, faith an’ patience, the other elephints are comin’.” “Mother av Glory,” I sez, “will I rough-ride the whole stud? Come an’ take me down, ye cowards!”

‘Thin a brace av fat she-elephints wid mahouts an’ a commissariat sergint came shuffling round the corner av the barricks; an’ the mahouts was abusin’ ould Potiphar’s mother an’ blood-kin.

“ Obsarve my reinforcemints,” I sez. “The’re goin’ to take you to Clink, my son”; an’ the child av calamity put his ears forward an’ swung head on to those females. The pluck av him, afther my oratorio on his brain-pan, wint to the heart av me. “I’m in dishgrace mesilf,” I sez, “but I’ll do what I can for ye. Will ye go to Clink like a man, or fight like a fool whin there’s no chanst?” Wid that I fetched him wan last

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lick on the head, an' he fetched a tremenjus groan an' dhropped his thrunk. "Think," sez I to him, an' "Halt!" I sez to the mahouts. They was anxious so to do. I could feel the ould reprob' meditating undher me. At last he put his thrunk straight out an' gave a most melancholious toot (the like av a sigh wid an elephint); an' by that I knew the white flag was up an' the rest was no more than considherin' his feelin's.

"He's done," I sez. "Kape open ordher left an' right alongside. We'll go to Clink quiet."

"Sez the commissariat sergeant to me from his elephint, "Are you a man or a mericle?" sez he.

"I'm betwixt an' betune," I sez, thryin' to set up stiff-back. "An' what," sez I, "may ha' set this animal off in this opprobrious shtyle?" I sez, the gun-butt light an' easy on my hip an' my left hand dhropped, such as throopers behave. We was bowlin' on to the elephint-lines under escort all this time.

"I was not in the lines whin the throuble began," sez the sergeant. "They tuk him off carryin' tents an' such like, an' put him to the gun-team. I knew he would not like ut, but by token it fair tore his heart out."

"Faith, wan man's meat is another's poison," I sez. "'Twas bein' put on to carry tents that was the ruin av me." An' my heart warrumed

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to Ould Double Ends bekase he had been put upon.

““We'll close on him here,” sez the sergeant, whin we got to the elephint-lines. All the mahouts an' their childher was round the pickets cursin' my poney from a mile to hear. “You skip off on to my elephint's back,” he sez. “There'll be throuble.”

““Sind that howlin' crowd away,” I sez, “or he'll thrample the life out av them.” I cud feel his ears beginnin' to twitch. “An' do you an' your immoril she-elephints go well clear away. I will get down here. He's an Irishman,” I sez, “for all his long Jew's nose, an' he shall be threated like an Irishman.”

““Are ye tired av life?” sez the sergeant.

““Divil a bit,” I sez; “but wan av us has to win, an' I'm av opinion 'tis me. Get back,” I sez.

“The two elephints wint off, an' Smith O'Brine came to a halt dead above his own pickuts. “Down,” sez I, whackin' him on the head, an' down he wint, shouldher over shouldher like a hill-side slippin' afther rain. “Now,” sez I, slidin' down his nose an' runnin' to the front av him, “you will see the man that's betther than you.”

“His big head was down betune his big fore-

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feet, an' they was twisted in sideways like a kitten's. He looked the picture av innocince an' forlorn-someness, an' by this an' that his big hairy undherlip was thremblin', an' he winked his eyes together to kape from cryin'. "For the love av God," I sez, clean forgettin' he was a dumb baste, "don't take ut to heart so! Aisy, be aisy," I sez; an' wid that I rubbed his cheek an' betune his eyes an' the top av his thrunk, talkin' all the time. "Now," sez I, "I'll make you comfortable for the night. Send wan or two childher here," I sez to the sergeant who was watchin' for to see me killed. "He'll rouse at the sight av a man."

"You got bloomin' clever all of a sudden," said Ortheris. "'Ow did you come to know 'is funny little ways that soon?'

"Bekase," said Terence with emphasis, "bekase I had conquered the beggar, my son."

"Ho!" said Ortheris between doubt and derision. "G'on."

"His mahout's child an' wan or two other linebabies came runnin' up, not bein' afraid av anything, an' some got wather, an' I washed the top av his poor sore head (begad, I had done him to a turn!), an' some picked the pieces av carts out av his hide, an' we scraped him, an' handled him all over, an' we put a thunderin' big poultice av neem-leaves (the same that we stick on a pony's gall) on

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his head, an' it looked like a smokin'-cap, an' we put a pile av young sugar-cane forninst him, an' he began to pick at ut. "Now," sez I, settin' down on his fore-foot, "we'll have a dhrink, an' let bygones be." I sent a naygur-child for a quart av arrack, an' the sergeant's wife she sint me out four fingers av whisky, an' when the liquor came I cud see by the twinkle in Ould Typhoon's eye that he was no more a stranger to ut than me,—worse luck, than me! So he tuk his quart like a Christian, an' *thin* I put his shackles on, chained him fore an' aft to the pickets, an' gave him my blessin' an' wint back to barricks.'

'And after?' I said in the pause.

'Ye can guess,' said Mulvaney. 'There was confusion, an' the colonel gave me ten rupees, an' the adj'tant gave me five, an' my comp'ny captain gave me five, an' the men carried me round the barricks shoutin'.'

'Did you go to Clink?' said Ortheris.

'I niver heard a word more about the mis-undherstandin' wid Kearney's beak, if that's what you mane; but sev'ril av the bhoys was tuk off sudden to the Holy Christians' Hotel that night. Small blame to thim,—they had twenty rupees in dhrinks. I wint to lie down an' sleep ut off, for I was as done an' double done as him there in the lines. 'Tis no small thing to go ride elephants.

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‘Subsequint, me an’ the Venerable Father av Sin became mighty friendly. I wud go down to the lines, whin I was in dishgrace, an’ spend an afthernoon collogin’ wid him; he chewin’ wan stick av sugar-cane an’ me another, as thick as thieves. He’d take all I had out av my pockets an’ put ut back again, an’ now an’ thin I’d bring him beer for his dijistin’, an’ I’d give him advice about bein’ well behaved an’ keepin’ off the books. Afther that he wint the way av the Army, an’ that’s bein’ thransferred as soon as you’ve made a good friend.’

‘So you never saw him again?’ I demanded.

‘Do you belave the first half av the affair?’ said Terence.

‘I’ll wait till Learoyd comes,’ I said evasively. Except when he was carefully tutored by the other two and the immediate money-benefit explained, the Yorkshireman did not tell lies; and Terence, I knew, had a profligate imagination.

‘There’s another part still,’ said Mulvaney. ‘Ortheris was in that.’

‘Then I’ll believe it all,’ I answered, not from any special belief in Ortheris’s word, but from desire to learn the rest. Ortheris stole a pup from me when our acquaintance was new, and with the little beast stifling under his overcoat, denied not only the theft, but that he ever was interested in dogs.

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‘That was at the beginnin’ av the Afghan business,’ said Mulvaney; ‘years afther the men that had seen me do the thrick was dead or gone home. I came not to speak av ut at the last,—bekase I do *not* care to knock the face av ivry man that calls me a liar. At the very beginnin’ av the marchin’ I wint sick like a fool. I had a boot-gall, but I was all for keepin’ up wid the rig’mint and such like foolishness. So I finished up wid a hole in my heel that you cud ha’ dhruv a tent-peg into. Faith, how often have I preached that to recruities since, for a warnin’ to them to look afther their feet! Our docthor, who knew our business as well as his own, he sez to me, in the middle av the Tangi Pass it was: “That’s sheer damned carelessness,” sez he. “How often have I tould you that a marchin’ man is no stronger than his feet,—his feet,—his feet!” he sez. “Now to hospital you go,” he sez, “for three weeks, an expense to your Quane an’ a nuisance to your counthry. Next time,” sez he, “perhaps you’ll put some av the whisky you pour down your throat, an’ some av the tallow you put into your hair, into your socks,” sez he. Faith he was a just man. So soon as we come to the head av the Tangi I wint to hospital, hoppin’ on wan fut, woild wid disappointment. ’Twas a field-hospital (all flies an’ native apothecaries an’ liniment) dhropped, in

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a way av speakin', close by the head av the Tangi. The hospital guard was ravin' mad wid us sick for keepin' thim there, an' we was ravin' mad at bein' kept; an' through the Tangi, day an' night an' night an' day, the fut an' horse an' guns an' commissariat an' tents an' followers av the brigades was pourin' like a coffee-mill. The doolies came dancin' through, scores an' scores av thim, an' they'd turn up the hill to hospital wid their sick, an' I lay in bed nursin' my heel, an' hearin' the men bein' tuk out. I remember wan night (the time I was tuk wid fever) a man came rowlin' through the tents an', "Is there any room to die here?" he sez; "there's none wid the columns"; an' at that he dropped dead across a cot, an' thin the man in ut began to complain against dyin' all alone in the dust undher dead men. Thin I must ha' turned mad wid the fever, an' for a week I was prayin' the saints to stop the noise av the columns movin' through the Tangi. Gun-wheels it was that wore my head thin. Ye know how 'tis wid fever?"

We nodded; there was no need to explain.

'Gun-wheels an' feet an' people shoutin', but mostly gun-wheels. 'Twas neither night nor day to me for a week. In the mornin' they'd rowl up the tent-flies, an' we sick cud look at the Pass an' considher what was comin' next. Horse, fut, or guns, they'd be sure to ddrop wan or two sick wid

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us an' we'd get news. Wan mornin', whin the fever hild off of me, I was watchin' the Tangi, an' 'twas just like the picture on the backside av the Afghan medal,—men an' elephints an' guns comin' wan at a time crawlin' out of a dhrain.'

'It were a dhrain,' said Ortheris with feeling. 'I've fell out an' been sick in the Tangi twice; an' wot turns my innards ain't no bloomin' vi'lets neither.'

'The Pass gave a twist at the ind, so everything shot out suddint an' they'd built a throop-bridge (mud an' dead mules) over a nullah at the head av ut. I lay an' counted the elephints (gun-elephints) thryin' the bridge wid their thrunks an' rolling out sagacious. The fifth elephant's head came round the corner, an' he threw up his thrunk, an' he fetched a toot, an' there he shtuck at the head of the Tangi like a cork in a bottle. "Faith," thinks I to mysilf, "he will not thrust the bridge; there will be throuble."

'Trouble! My Gawd!' said Ortheris. 'Terence, I was be'ind that blooming 'uttee up to my stock in dust. Trouble!'

'Tell on then, little man; I only saw the hospital ind av ut.' Mulvaney knocked the ashes out of his pipe, as Ortheris heaved the dogs aside and went on.

'We was escort to them guns, three comp'nies

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of us,' he said. 'Dewcy was our major, an' our orders was to roll up anything we come across in the Tangi an' shove it out t'other end. Sort o' pop-gun picnic, see? We'd rolled up a lot o' lazy beggars o' native followers, an' some commissariat supplies that was bivoo-whackin' for ever seemin'ly, an' all the sweepin's of 'arf a dozen things what ought to 'ave bin at the front weeks ago, an' Dewcy, he sez to us: "You're most 'eart-breakin' sweeps," 'e sez. "For 'eving's sake," sez 'e, "do a little sweepin' now." So we swep',—s'welp me, 'ow we did sweep 'em along! There was a full reg'ment be'ind us; most anxious to get on they was; an' they kep' on sendin' to us with the colonel's compliments, an' what in 'ell was we stoppin' the way for, please? Oh, they was partic'lar polite! So was Dewcy! 'E sent 'em back wot-for, an' 'e give us wot-for, an' we give the guns wot-for, an' they give the commissariat wot-for, an' the commissariat give first-class extry wot-for to the native followers, an' on we'd go again till we was stuck, an' the 'ole Pass 'ud be swimmin' Allelujah for a mile an' a 'arf. We 'adn't no tempers, nor no seats to our trousies, an' our coats an' our rifles was chucked in the carts, so as we might ha' been cut up any minute, an' we was doin' drover-work. That was wot it was; drovin' on the Islinton road!

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‘I was close up at the ‘ead of the column when we saw the end of the Tangi openin’ out ahead of us, an’ I sez: “The door’s open, boys. ‘O’ll git to the gall’ry fust?” I sez. Then I saw Dewcy screwin’ is bloomin’ eyeglass in ‘is eye an’ lookin’ straight on. “Propped,—*ther* beggar!” he sez; an’ the be’ind end o’ that bloomin’ old ‘uttee was shinin’ through the dust like a bloomin’ old moon made o’ tarpaulin. Then we ’alted, all chock-a-block, one atop o’ the other, an’ right at the back o’ the guns there sails in a lot o’ silly grinnin’ camels, what the commissariat was in charge of—sailin’ away as if they was at the Zoological Gardens an’ squeezin’ our men most awful. The dust was that up you couldn’t see your ‘and; an’ the more we ’it ’em on the ‘ead the more their drivers sez, “Accha! Accha!” an’ by Gawd it was “at yer” before you knew where you was. An’ that ‘uttee’s be’ind end stuck in the Pass good an’ tight, an’ no one knew wot for.

‘Fust thing we ’ad to do was to fight they bloomin’ camels. I wasn’t goin’ to be eat by no *bull-oont*; so I ’eld up my trousies with one ‘and, standin’ on a rock, an’ it away with my belt at every nose I saw bobbin’ above me. Then the camels fell back, an’ they ’ad to fight to keep the rear-guard an’ the native followers from crushin’ into them; an’ the rear-guard ’ad to send down

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the Tangi to warn the other reg'ment that we was blocked. I 'eard the mahouts shoutin' in front that the 'uttee wouldn't cross the bridge; an' I saw Dewcy skippin' about through the dust like a mosquito worm in a tank. Then our comp'nies got tired o' waitin' an' begun to mark time, an' some goat struck up *Tommy, make room for your Uncle*. After that, you couldn't neither see nor breathe nor 'ear; an' there we was, singin' bloomin' serenades to the end of a' elephant that don't care for tunes! I sung too; I couldn't do nothin' else. They was strengthenin' the bridge in front, all for the sake of the 'uttee. By an' by a' orf'cer caught me by the throat an' choked the sing out of me. So I caught the next man I could see by the throat an' choked the sing out of 'im.'

'What's the difference between being choked by an officer and being hit?' I asked, remembering a little affair in which Ortheris's honour had been injured by his lieutenant.

'One's a bloomin' lark, an' one's a bloomin' insult!' said Ortheris. 'Besides, we was on service, an' no one cares what an orf'cer does then, s'long as 'e gets our rations an' don't get us unusual cut up. After that we got quiet, an' I 'eard Dewcy say that 'e'd court-martial the lot of us soon as we was out of the Tangi. Then we give three cheers for Dewcy an' three more for the Tangi; an' the

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'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass, so we cheered *that*. Then they said the bridge had been strengthened, an' we give three cheers for the bridge; but the 'uttee wouldn't move a bloomin' hinch. Not 'im! Then we cheered 'im again, an' Kite Dawson, that was corner-man at all the sing-songs ('e died on the way down), began to give a nigger lecture on the be'ind ends of elephants, an' Dewcy, 'e tried to keep 'is face for a minute, but, Lord, you couldn't do such when Kite was playin' the fool an' askin' whether 'e mightn't 'ave leave to rent a villa an' raise 'is orphan children in the Tangi, 'cos 'e couldn't get 'ome no more. Then up come a orf'cer (mounted, like a fool, too) from the reg'mint at the back with some more of his colonel's pretty little compliments, an' what was this delay, please. We sung 'im *There's another bloomin' row downstairs* till 'is 'orse bolted, an' then we give 'im three cheers; an' Kite Dawson sez 'e was goin' to write to *The Times* about the awful state of the streets in Afghanistan. The 'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass all the time. At last one o' the mahouts came to Dewcy an' sez something. "Oh Lord!" sez Dewcy, "I don't know the beggar's visiting-list! I'll give 'im another ten minutes an' then I'll shoot 'im." Things was gettin' pretty dusty in the Tangi, so we all listened. "'E wants to see a friend," sez

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Dewcy out loud to the men, an' 'e mopped 'is forehead an' sat down on a gun-tail.

'I leave it to you to judge 'ow the reg'ment shouted. "That's all right," we sez. "Three cheers for Mister Winterbottom's friend," sez we. "Why didn't you say so at first? Pass the word for old Swizzletail's wife,"—and such like. Some o' the men they didn't laugh. They took it same as if it might have been a' introduction like, 'cos they knew about 'uttees. Then we all run forward over the guns an' in an' out among the elephants' legs,—Lord, I wonder 'arf the comp'nies wasn't squashed—an' the next thing I saw was Terence 'ere, lookin' like a sheet o' wet paper, comin' down the 'illside wid a sergeant. "'Strewth," I sez. "I might ha' knowed 'e'd be at the bottom of any cat's trick," sez I. Now you tell wot 'appened your end?"

'I lay be the same as you did, little man, listenin' to the noises an' the bhoys singin'. Presintly I heard whisperin' an' the doctor sayin', "Get out av this, wakin' my sick wid your jokes about elephints." An' another man sez, all angry: "'Tis a joke that is stoppin' two thousand men in the Tangi. That son av sin av a haybag av an elephint sez, or the mahouts sez for him, that he wants to see a friend, an' he'll not lift hand or fut till he finds him. I'm wore out wid inthro-

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jucin' sweepers an' coolies to him, an' his hide's as full o' bay'net pricks as a mosquito-net av holes, an' I'm here undher ordhers, docther dear, to ask if any one, sick or well, or alive or dead, knows an elephint. I'm not mad," he sez, settin' on a box av medical comforts. "'Tis my ordhers, an' 'tis my mother," he sez, "that would laugh at me for the father av all fools to-day. Does any wan here know an elephint?" We sick was all quiet.

"Now you've had your answer," sez the doctor. "Go away."

"Hould on," I sez, thinkin' mistiways in my cot, an' I did not know my own voice. "I'm by way av bein' acquainted wid an elephant, myself," I sez.

"That's delirium," sez the doctor. "See what you've done, sergeant. Lie down, man," he sez, seein' me thryin' to get up.

"'Tis not," I sez. "I rode him round Cawn-pore barricks. He will not ha' forgotten. I bruk his head wid a rifle."

"Mad as a coot," sez the doctor, an' thin he felt my head. "It's quare," sez he. "Man," he sez, "if you go, d'you know 'twill either kill or cure?"

"What do I care?" sez I. "If I'm mad, 'tis better dead."

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“Faith, that’s sound enough,” sez the doctor.
“You’ve no fever on you now.”

“Come on,” sez the sergeant. “We’re all mad to-day, an’ the throops are wantin’ their dinner.” He put his arm round av me an’ I came into the sun, the hills an’ the rocks skippin’ big giddy-go-rounds. “Seventeen years have I been in the army,” sez the sergeant, “an’ the days av mericles are not done. They’ll be givin’ us more pay next. Begad,” he sez, “the brute knows you!”

‘Ould Obstructionist was screamin’ like all possist whin I came up, an’ I heard forty million men up the Tangi shoutin’, “He knows him!” Thin the big thrunk came round me an’ I was nigh fainting wid weakness. “Are you well, Malachi?” I sez, givin’ him the name he answered to in the lines. “Malachi, my son, are you well?” sez I, “for I am not.” At that he thrumeted again till the Pass rang to ut, an’ the other elephints tuk it up. Thin I got a little strength back. “Down, Malachi,” I sez, “an’ put me up, but touch me tendher for I am not good.” He was on his knees in a minut an’ he slung me up as gentle as a girl. “Go on now, my son,” I sez. “You’re blockin’ the road.” He fetched wan more joyous toot, an’ swung grand out av the head av the Tangi, his gun-gear clankin’ on his back; an’

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at the back av him there wint the most amazin' shout I iver heard. An' thin I felt my head shpin, an' a mighty sweat bruk out on me, an' Malachi was growin' taller an' taller to me settin' on his back, an' I sez, foolish like an' weak, smilin' all round an' about, "Take me down," I sez, "or I'll fall."

"The next I remimber was lyin' in my cot again, limp as a chewed rag, but cured av the fever, an' the Tangi as empty as the back av my hand. They'd all gone up to the front, an' ten days later I wint up too, havin' blocked an' unblocked an entire army corps. What do you think av ut, sorr?"

"I'll wait till I see Learoyd," I repeated.

"Ah'm here," said a shadow from among the shadows. "Ah've heard t' tale too."

"Is it true, Jock?"

"Ay; true as t'owd bitch has getten t'mange. Orth'ris, yo' maun't let t'dawgs hev owt to do wi' her."

ONE VIEW OF THE QUESTION

From Shafiz Ullah Khan, son of Hyat Ullah Khan, in the honoured service of His Highness the Rao Sahib of Jagesur, which is in the northern borders of Hindustan, and Orderly to his Highness, this to Kazi Jamal-ud-Din, son of Kazi Ferisht-ud-Din Khan, in the service of the Rao Sahib, a minister much honoured. From that place which they call the Northbrook Club, in the town of London, under the shadow of the Empress, it is written :

Between brother and chosen brother be no long protestations of Love and Sincerity. Heart speaks naked to Heart, and the Head answers for all. Glory and Honour on thy house till the ending of the years and a tent in the borders of Paradise.

MY BROTHER,—In regard to that for which I was despatched follows the account. I have purchased for the Rao Sahib, and paid sixty pounds in every hundred,

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the things he most desired. Thus; two of the great fawn-coloured tiger-dogs, male and female, their pedigree being written upon paper, and silver collars adorning their necks. For the Rao Sahib's greater pleasure I send them at once by the steamer, in charge of a man who will render account of them at Bombay to the bankers there. They are the best of all dogs in this place. Of guns I have bought five—two silver-sprigged in the stock, with gold scroll-work about the hammer, both double-barrelled, hard-striking, cased in velvet and red leather; three of unequalled workmanship, but lacking adornment; a pump-gun that fires fourteen times—this when the Rao Sahib drives pig; a double-barrelled shell-gun for tiger, and that is a miracle of workmanship; and a fowling-piece no lighter than a feather, with green and blue cartridges by the thousand. Also a very small rifle for blackbuck, that yet would slay a man at four hundred paces. The harness with the golden crests for the Rao Sahib's coach is not yet complete, by reason of the difficulty of lining the red velvet into leather; but the two-horse harness and the great saddle with the golden holsters that is for state use have been put with camphor into a tin box, and I have signed it with my ring. Of the grained leather case of women's tools and tweezers for the hair and beard, of the perfumes

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and the silks, and all that was wanted by the women behind the curtains, I have no knowledge. They are matters of long coming, and the hawk-bells, hoods, and jesses with the golden lettering are as much delayed as they. Read this in the Rao Sahib's ear, and speak of my diligence and zeal, that favour may not be abated by absence, and keep the eye of constraint upon that jesting dog without teeth—Bahadur Shah—for by thy aid and voice, and what I have done in regard to the guns, I look, as thou knowest, for the headship of the army of Jagesur. That conscienceless one desires it also, and I have heard that the Rao Sahib leans thatward. Have ye done, then, with the drinking of wine in your house, my brother, or has Bahadur Shah become a forswearer of brandy? I would not that drink should end him; but the well-mixed draught leads to madness. Consider.

And now in regard to this land of the Sahibs, follows that thou hast demanded. God is my witness that I have striven to understand all that I saw and a little of what I heard. My words and intention are those of truth, yet it may be that I write of nothing but lies.

Since the first wonder and bewilderment of my beholding is gone—we note the jewels in the ceiling-dome, but later the filth on the floor—I see clearly that this town, London, which is as large as

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all Jagesur, is accursed, being dark and unclean, devoid of sun, and full of low-born, who are perpetually drunk, and howl in the streets like jackals, men and women together. At nightfall it is the custom of countless thousands of women to descend into the streets and sweep them, roaring, making jests, and demanding liquor. At the hour of this attack it is the custom of the householders to take their wives and children to the playhouses and the places of entertainment; evil and good thus returning home together as do kine from the pools at sundown. I have never seen any sight like this sight in all the world, and I doubt that a double is to be found on the hither side of the gates of Hell. Touching the mystery of their craft, it is an ancient one, but the householders assemble in herds, being men and women, and cry aloud to their God that it is not there; the said women pounding at the doors without. Moreover, upon the day when they go to prayer the drink-places are only opened when the mosques are shut; as who should dam the Jumna river for Friday only. Therefore the men and women, being forced to accomplish their desires in the shorter space, become the more furiously drunk, and roll in the gutter together. They are there regarded by those going to pray. Further, and for visible sign that the place is forgotten of God,

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there falls upon certain days, without warning, a cold darkness, whereby the sun's light is altogether cut off from all the city, and the people, male and female, and the drivers of the vehicles, grope and howl in this Pit at high noon, none seeing the other. The air being filled with the smoke of Hell—sulphur and pitch as it is written—they die speedily with gaspings, and so are buried in the dark. This is a terror beyond the pen, but, by my head, I write of what I have seen!

It is not true that the Sahibs worship one God, as do we of the Faith, or that the differences in their creed be like those now running between Shiah and Sunni. I am but a fighting man, and no darvesh, caring, as thou knowest, as much for Shiah as Sunni. But I have spoken to many people of the nature of their Gods. One there is who is the head of the Mukht-i-Fauj,¹ and he is worshipped by men in blood-red clothes, who shout and become without sense. Another is an image, before whom they burn candles and incense in just such a place as I have seen when I went to Rangoon to buy Burma ponies for the Rao. Yet a third has naked altars facing a great assembly of dead. To him they sing chiefly; and for others there is a woman who was the mother of the great prophet that was before Mahammed. The common folk have no

¹ Salvation Army.

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God, but worship those who may speak to them hanging from the lamps in the street. The most wise people worship themselves and such things as they have made with their mouths and their hands, and this is to be found notably among the barren women, of whom there are many. It is the custom of men and women to make for themselves such God as they desire ; pinching and patting the very soft clay of their thought into the acceptable mould of their lusts. So each is furnished with a Godling after his own heart ; and this Godling is changed in a little, as the stomach turns or the health is altered. Thou wilt not believe this tale, my brother. Nor did I when I was first told, but now it is nothing to me ; so greatly has the foot of travel let out the stirrup-holes of belief.

But thou wilt say, 'What matter to us whether Ahmed's beard or Mahmud's be the longer ! Speak what thou canst of the Accomplishment of Desire.' Would that thou wert here to talk face to face and walk abroad with me and learn.

To this people it is a matter of Heaven and Hell whether Ahmed's beard and Mahmud's tally or differ but by a hair. Thou knowest the system of their statecraft ? It is this. Certain men, appointing themselves, go about and speak to the low-born, the peasants, the leather-workers, and the cloth-dealers, and the women, saying : ' Give

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us leave by your favour to speak for you in the council.' Securing that permission by large promises, they return to the council-place, and, sitting unarmed, some six hundred together, speak at random each for himself and his own ball of low-born. The viziers and dewans of the Empress must ever beg money at their hands, for unless more than a half of the six hundred be of one heart towards the spending of the revenues, neither horse can be shod, rifle loaded, nor man clothed throughout the land. Remember this very continually. The six hundred are above the Empress, above the Viceroy of India, above the Head of the Army and every other power that thou hast ever known. *Because they hold the revenues.*

They are divided into two hordes—the one perpetually hurling abuse at the other, and bidding the low-born hamper and rebel against all that the other may devise for government. Except that they are unarmed, and so call each other liar, dog, and bastard without fear, even under the shadow of the Empress's throne, they are at bitter war which is without any end. They pit lie against lie, till the low-born and common folk grow drunk with lies, and in their turn begin to lie and refuse to pay the revenues. Further, they divide their women into bands, and send them into this fight with yellow flowers in their hands, and since the

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belief of a woman is but her lover's belief stripped of judgment, very many wild words are added. Well said the slave-girl to Mámún in the delectable pages of the Son of Abdullah :—

'Oppression and the sword slay fast—
Thy breath kills slowly but at last.'

If they desire a thing they declare that it is true. If they desire it not, though that were Death itself, they cry aloud, 'It has never been.' Thus their talk is the talk of children, and like children they snatch at what they covet, not considering whether it is their own or another's. And in their councils, when the army of unreason has come to the defile of dispute, and there is no more talk left on either side, they, dividing, count heads, and the will of that side which has the larger number of heads makes that law. But the outnumbered side run speedily among the common people and bid them trample on that law, and slay the officers thereof. Follows slaughter by night of men unarmed, and the slaughter of cattle and insults to women. They do not cut off the noses of women, but they crop their hair and scrape the flesh with pins. Then those shameless ones of the council stand up before the judges wiping their mouths and making oath. They say: 'Before God we are free from blame. Did we say, "Heave that stone out of that road

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and kill that one and no other"? So they are not made shorter by the head because they said only: 'Here are stones and yonder is such a fellow obeying the Law which is no law because we do not desire it.'

Read this in the Rao Sahib's ear, and ask him if he remembers that season when the Manglôt headmen refused revenue, not because they could not pay, but because they judged the cess extreme. I and thou went out with the troopers all one day, and the black lances raised the thatch, so that there was hardly any need of firing; and no man was slain. But this land is at secret war and veiled killing. In five years of peace they have slain within their own borders and of their own kin more men than would have fallen had the ball of dissension been left to the mallet of the army. And yet there is no hope of peace, for soon the sides again divide, and then they will cause to be slain more men unarmed and in the fields. And so much for that matter, which is to our advantage. There is a better thing to be told, and one tending to the Accomplishment of Desire. Read here with a fresh mind after sleep. I write as I understand.

Above all this war without honour lies that which I find hard to put into writing, and thou knowest I am unhandy of the pen. I will ride the

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steed of Inability sideways at the wall of Expression. The earth under foot is sick and sour with the much handling of man, as a grazing ground sours under cattle; and the air is sick too. Upon the ground they have laid in this town, as it were, the stinking boards of a stable, and through these boards, between a thousand thousand houses, the rank humours of the earth sweat through to the overburdened air that returns them to their breeding-place; for the smoke of their cooking fires keeps all in as the cover the juices of the sheep. And in like manner there is a green-sickness among the people, and especially among the six hundred men who talk. Neither winter nor autumn abates that malady of the soul. I have seen it among women in our own country, and in boys not yet blooded to the sword; but I have never seen so much thereof before. Through the peculiar operation of this thing the people, abandoning honour and steadfastness, question all authority, not as men question, but as girls, whimperingly, with pinching in the back when the back is turned and mowing. If one cries in the streets, 'There has been an injustice,' they take him not to make complaint to those appointed, but all who pass, drinking his words, fly clamorously to the house of the accused and write evil things of him, his wives and his daughters; for they take no thought

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to the weighing of evidence, but are as women. And with one hand they beat their constables who guard the streets, and with the other beat the constables for resenting that beating, and fine them. When they have in all things made light of the State they cry to the State for help, and it is given, so that the next time they will cry more. Such as are oppressed riot through the streets, bearing banners that hold four days' labour and a week's bread in cost and toil; and when neither horse nor foot can pass by they are satisfied. Others, receiving wages, refuse to work till they get more, and the priests help them, and also men of the six hundred—for where rebellion is, one of those men will come as a kite to a dead bullock—and priests, talker, and men together declare that it is right because these will not work that no others may attempt. In this manner they have so confused the loading and the unloading of the ships that come to this town that, in sending the Rao Sahib's guns and harness, I saw fit to send the cases by the train to another ship that sailed from another place. There is now no certainty in any sending. But who injures the merchants shuts the door of well-being on the city and the army. And ye know what Sa'adi saith:—

‘How may the merchant westward fare,
When he hears the tale of the tumults there?’

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No man can keep faith because he cannot tell how his underlings will go. They have made the servant greater than the master, for that he is the servant; not reckoning that each is equal under God to the appointed task. That is a thing to be put aside in the cupboard of the mind.

Further, the misery and outcry of the common folk of whom the earth's bosom is weary, has so wrought upon the minds of certain people who have never slept under fear nor seen the flat edge of the sword on the heads of a mob, that they cry out: 'Let us abate everything that is, and altogether labour with our bare hands.' Their hands in that employ would fester at the second stroke; and I have seen, for all their unrest at the agonies of others, they abandon no whit of soft living. Unknowing the common folk, or indeed the minds of men, they offer strong drink of words, such as they themselves use, to empty bellies; and that wine breeds drunkenness of soul. The distressful persons stand all day long at the door of the drink-places to the number of very many thousands. The well-wishing people of small discernment give them words or pitifully attempt in schools to turn them into craftsmen, weavers, or builders, of whom there be more than enough. Yet they have not the wisdom to look at the hands of the taught, whereon a man's craft

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and that of his father is written by God and Necessity. They believe that the son of a drunkard shall drive a straight chisel and the charioteer do plaster-work. They take no thought in the dispensation of generosity, which is as the closed fingers of a water-scooping palm. Therefore the rough timber of a very great army drifts unhewn through the slime of their streets. If the Government, which is to-day and to-morrow changes, spent on these hopeless ones some money to clothe and equip, I should not write what I write. But these people despise the trade of arms, and rest content with the memory of old battles; the women and the talking men aiding them.

Thou wilt say: 'Why speak continually of women and fools?' I answer by God, the Fashioner of the Heart, the fools sit among the six hundred, and the women sway their councils. Hast thou forgotten when the order came across the seas that rotted out the armies of the English with us, so that soldiers fell sick by the hundred where but ten had sickened before? That was the work of not more than twenty of the men and some fifty of the barren women. I have seen three or four of them, male and female, and they triumph openly, in the name of their God, because three regiments of the white troops are not. This is to our advantage; because the sword with the

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rust-spot breaks over the turban of the enemy. But if they thus tear their own flesh and blood ere their madness be risen to its height, what will they do when the moon is full?

Seeing that power lay in the hands of the six hundred, and not in the Viceroy or elsewhere, I have throughout my stay sought the shadow of those among them who talk most and most extravagantly. They lead the common folk, and receive permission from their good-will. It is the desire of some of these men—indeed, of almost as many as caused the rotting of the English army—that our lands and peoples should accurately resemble those of the English upon this very day. May God, the Contemner of Folly, forbid! I myself am accounted a show among them, and of us and ours they know naught, some calling me Hindu and others Rajput, and using towards me, in ignorance, slave-talk and expressions of great disrespect. Some of them are well-born, but the greater part are low-born, coarse-skinned, waving their arms, high-voiced, without dignity, slack in the mouth, shifty-eyed, and, as I have said, swayed by the wind of a woman's cloak.

Now this is a tale but two days old. There was a company at meat, and a high-voiced woman spoke to me, in the face of the men, of the affairs of our womankind. It was her ignorance that

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made each word an edged insult. Remembering this I held my peace till she had spoken a new law as to the control of our zenanas, and all who are behind the curtains.

Then I—‘Hast thou ever felt the life stir under thy heart or laid a little son between thy breasts, O most unhappy?’ Thereto she hotly, with a haggard eye—‘No, for I am a free woman, and no servant of babes.’ Then I softly—‘God deal lightly with thee, my sister, for thou art in heavier bondage than any slave, and the fuller half of the earth is hidden from thee. The first ten years of the life of a man are his mother’s, and from the dusk to the dawn surely the wife may command the husband. Is it a great thing to stand back in the waking hours while the men go abroad unhampered by thy hands on the bridle-rein?’ Then she wondered that a heathen should speak thus: yet she is a woman honoured among these men, and openly professes that she hath no profession of faith in her mouth. Read this in the ear of the Rao Sahib, and demand how it would fare with me if I brought such a woman for his use. It were worse than that yellow desert-bred girl from Cutch, who set the girls to fighting for her own pleasure, and slippered the young prince across the mouth. Rememberest thou?

In truth the fountain-head of power is putrid

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with long standing still. These men and women would make of all India a dung-cake, and would fain leave the mark of the fingers upon it. And they have power and the control of the revenues, and that is why I am so particular in description. *They have power over all India.* Of what they speak they understand nothing, for the low-born's soul is bounded by his field, and he grasps not the connection of affairs from pole to pole. They boast openly that the Viceroy and the others are their servants. When the masters are mad, what shall the servants do?

Some hold that all war is sin, and Death the greatest fear under God. Others declare with the Prophet that it is evil to drink, to which teaching their streets bear evident witness; and others there are, specially the low-born, who aver that all dominion is wicked and sovereignty of the sword accursed. These protested to me, making, as it were, an excuse that their kin should hold Hindustan, and hoping that upon a day they will depart. Knowing well the breed of white man in our borders I would have laughed, but forbore, remembering that these speakers had power in the counting of heads. Yet others cry aloud against the taxation of Hindustan under the Sahib's rule. To this I assent, remembering the yearly mercy of the Rao Sahib when the turbans of the

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troopers come through the blighted corn, and the women's anklets go into the melting-pot. But I am no good speaker. *That* is the duty of the boys from Bengal—hill asses with an eastern bray—Mahrattas from Poona, and the like. These, moving among fools, represent themselves as the sons of some one, being beggar-taught, offspring of grain-dealers, curriers, sellers of bottles, and money-lenders, as thou knowest. Now, we of Jagesur owe naught save friendship to the English who took us by the sword, and having taken us let us go, assuring the Rao Sahib's succession for all time. But *these* base-born, having won their learning through the mercy of the Government, attired in English clothes, forswearing the faith of their fathers for gain, spread rumour and debate against the Government, and are, therefore, very dear to certain of the six hundred. I have heard these cattle speak as princes and rulers of men, and I have laughed ; but not altogether.

Once it happened that a son of some grain-bag sat with me at meat, who was arrayed and speaking after the manner of the English. At each mouthful he committed perjury against the Salt that he had eaten ; the men and women applauding. When, craftily falsifying, he had magnified oppression and invented untold wrong, together with the desecration of his tun-bellied gods, he demanded

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in the name of his people the government of all our land, and turning, laid palm to my shoulder, saying—‘Here is one who is with us, albeit he professes another faith ; he will bear out my words.’ This he delivered in English, and, as it were, exhibited me to that company. Preserving a smiling countenance, I answered in our own tongue—‘Take away that hand, man without a father, or the folly of these folk shall not save thee, nor my silence guard thy reputation. Sit off, herd.’ And in their speech I said—‘He speaks truth. When the favour and wisdom of the English allows us yet a little larger share in the burden and the reward, the Mussulman will deal with the Hindu.’ He alone saw what was in my heart. I was merciful towards him because he was accomplishing our desires ; but remember that his father is one Durga Charan Laha, in Calcutta. Lay thy hand upon *his* shoulder if ever chance sends. It is not good that bottle-dealers and auctioneers should paw the sons of princes. I walk abroad sometimes with the man that all this world may know the Hindu and Mussulman are one, but when we come to the unfrequented streets I bid him walk behind me, and that is sufficient honour.

And why did I eat dirt ?

Thus, my brother, it seems to my heart, which

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has almost burst in the consideration of these matters. The Bengalis and the beggar-taught boys know well that the Sahib's power to govern comes neither from the Viceroy nor the head of the army, but from the hands of the six hundred in this town, and peculiarly those who talk most. They will therefore yearly address themselves more and more to that protection, and working on the green-sickness of the land, as has ever been their custom, will in time cause, through the perpetually-instigated interference of the six hundred, the hand of the Indian Government to become inoperative, so that no measure nor order may be carried through without clamour and argument on their part; for that is the delight of the English at this hour. Have I overset the bounds of possibility? No. Even thou must have heard that one of the six hundred, having neither knowledge, fear, nor reverence before his eyes, has made in sport a new and a written scheme for the government of Bengal, and openly shows it abroad as a king might read his crowning proclamation. And this man, meddling in affairs of State, speaks in the council for an assemblage of leather-dressers, makers of boots and harness, and openly glories in that he has no God. Has either minister of the Empress, Empress, Viceroy, or any other raised a voice against this leather-man? Is not his power there-

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fore to be sought, and that of his like-thinkers with it? Thou seest.

The telegraph is the servant of the six hundred, and all the Sahibs in India, omitting not one, are the servants of the telegraph. Yearly, too, thou knowest, the beggar-taught will hold that which they call their Congress, first at one place and then at another, leavening Hindustan with rumour, echoing the talk among the low-born people here, and demanding that they, like the six hundred, control the revenues. And they will bring every point and letter over the heads of the Governors and the Lieutenant-Governors, and whoever hold authority, and cast it clamorously at the feet of the six hundred here; and certain of those word-founders and the barren women will assent to their demands, and others will weary of disagreement. Thus fresh confusion will be thrown into the councils of the Empress even as the island near by is helped and comforted into the smothered war of which I have written. Then yearly, as they have begun and we have seen, the low-born men of the six hundred anxious for honour will embark for our land, and, staying a little while, will gather round them and fawn before the beggar-taught, and these departing from their side will assuredly inform the peasants, and the fighting men for whom there is no employ, that there is a change

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toward and a coming of help from over the seas. That rumour will not grow smaller in the spreading. And, most of all, the Congress, when it is not under the eye of the six hundred—who, though they foment dissension and death, pretend great reverence for the law which is no law—will, stepping aside, deliver uneasy words to the peasants, speaking, as it has done already, of the remission of taxation, and promising a new rule. That is to our advantage, but the flower of danger is in the seed of it. Thou knowest what evil a rumour may do; though in the Black Year when thou and I were young our standing to the English brought gain to Jagesur and enlarged our borders, for the Government gave us land on both sides. Of the Congress itself nothing is to be feared that ten troopers could not remove; but if its words too soon perturb the minds of those waiting or *of princes in idleness*, a flame may come before the time, and since there are now many white hands to quench it, all will return to the former condition. If the flame be kept under we need have no fear, because, sweating and panting, the one trampling on the other, the white people here are digging their own graves. The hand of the Viceroy will be tied, the hearts of the Sahibs will be downcast, and all eyes will turn to England disregarding any orders. Meantime, keeping tally on the sword-

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hilt against the hour when the score must be made smooth by the blade, it is well for us to assist and greatly befriend the Bengali that he may get control of the revenues and the posts. We must even write to England that we be of one blood with the school-men. It is not long to wait; by my head it is not long! This people are like the great king Ferisht, who, eaten with the scabs of long idleness, plucked off his crown and danced naked among the dunghills. But I have not forgotten the profitable end of that tale. The vizier set him upon a horse and led him into battle. Presently his health returned and he caused to be engraven on the crown:—

‘Though I was cast away by the king,
Yet, through God, I returned and he added to my brilliance
Two great rubies (Balkh and Iran).’

If this people be purged and bled out by battle, their sickness may go and their eyes be cleared to the necessities of things. But they are now far gone in rottenness. Even the stallion, too long heel-roped, forgets how to fight; and these men are mules. I do not lie when I say that unless they are bled and taught with the whip, they will hear and obey all that is said by the Congress and the black men here, hoping to turn our land into their own orderless Jehannum. For the men of the six hundred, being chiefly low-born and unused

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to authority, desire much to exercise rule, extending their arms to the sun and moon, and shouting very greatly in order to hear the echo of their voices, each one saying some new strange thing, and parting the goods and honour of others among the rapacious, that he may obtain the favour of the common folk. And all this is to our advantage.

Therefore write, that they may read, of gratitude and of love and the law. I myself, when I return, will show how the dish should be dressed to take the taste here; for it is here that we must come. Cause to be established in Jagesur a newspaper, and fill it with translations of their papers. A beggar-taught may be brought from Calcutta for thirty rupees a month, and if he writes in Gurmukhi our people cannot read. Create, further, councils other than the panchayats of headmen, village by village and district by district, instructing them beforehand what to say according to the order of the Rao. Print all these things in a book in English, and send it to this place, and to every man of the six hundred. Bid the beggar-taught write in front of all that Jagesur follows fast on the English plan. If thou squeezest the Hindu shrine at Theegkot, and it is ripe, remit the head-tax, and perhaps the marriage-tax, with great publicity. But above all things keep the troops ready, and in good pay, even though we

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glean the stubble with the wheat and stint the Rao Sahib's women. All must go softly. Protest thou thy love for the voice of the common people in all things, and affect to despise the troops. That shall be taken for a witness in this land. The headship of the troops must be mine. See that Bahadur Shah's wits go wandering over the wine, but do not send him to God. I am an old man, but I may yet live to lead.

If this people be not bled out and regain strength, we, watching how the tide runs, when we see that the shadow of their hand is all but lifted from Hindustan, must bid the Bengali demand the removal of the residue or set going an uneasiness to that end. We must have a care neither to hurt the life of the Englishmen nor the honour of their women, for in that case six times the six hundred here could not hold those who remain from making the land swim. We must care that they are not mobbed by the Bengalis, but honourably escorted, while the land is held down with the threat of the sword if a hair of their heads fall. Thus we shall gain a good name, and when rebellion is unaccompanied by bloodshed, as has lately befallen in a far country, the English, disregarding honour, call it by a new name: even one who has been a minister of the Empress, but is now at war against the law, praises it openly before the common

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folk. So greatly are they changed since the days of Nikhal Seyn!¹ And then, if all go well and the Sahibs, who through continual checking and brow-beating will have grown sick at heart, see themselves abandoned by their kin—for this people have allowed their greatest to die on dry sand through delay and fear of expense—we may go forward. This people are swayed by names. A new name, therefore, must be given to the rule of Hindustan (and that the Bengalis may settle among themselves), and there will be many writings and oaths of love, such as the little island over seas makes when it would fight more bitterly; and after that the residue are diminished the hour comes, and we must strike so that the sword is never any more questioned.

By the favour of God and the conservation of the Sahibs these many years, Hindustan contains very much plunder, which we can in no way eat hurriedly. There will be to our hand the scaffolding of the house of State, for the Bengali shall continue to do our work, and must account to us for the revenue, and learn his seat in the order of things. Whether the Hindu kings of the west will break in to share that spoil before we have swept it altogether, thou knowest better than I; but be certain that, then, strong hands will seek

¹ Nicholson, a gentleman once of some notoriety in India.

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their own thrones, and it may be that the days of the king of Delhi will return if we only, curbing our desires, pay due obedience to the outward appearances and the names. Thou rememberest the old song—

‘Hadst thou not called it Love, I had said it were a drawn sword,

But since thou hast spoken, I believe and—I die.’

It is in my heart that there will remain in our land a few Sahibs undesirous of returning to England. These we must cherish and protect, that by their skill and cunning we may hold together and preserve unity in time of war. The Hindu kings will never trust a Sahib in the core of their counsels. I say again that if we of the Faith confide in them, we shall trample upon our enemies.

Is all this a dream to thee, gray fox of my mother’s bearing? I have written of what I have seen and heard, but from the same clay two men will never fashion platters alike, nor from the same facts draw equal conclusions. Once more, there is a green-sickness upon all the people of this country. They eat dirt even now to stay their cravings. Honour and stability have departed from their councils, and the knife of dissension has brought down upon their heads the flapping tent-flies of confusion. The Empress is old. They speak disrespectfully of her and hers in the street.

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They despise the sword, and believe that the tongue and the pen sway all. The measure of their ignorance and their soft belief is greater than the measure of the wisdom of Solomon, the son of David. All these things I have seen whom they regard as a wild beast and a spectacle. By God the Enlightener of Intelligence, if the Sahibs in India could breed sons who lived so that their houses might be established, I would almost fling my sword at the Viceroy's feet, saying: 'Let us here fight for a kingdom together, thine and mine, disregarding the babble across the water. Write a letter to England, saying that we love them, but would depart from their camps and make all clean under a new crown.' But the Sahibs die out at the third generation in our land, and it may be that I dream dreams. Yet not altogether. Until a white calamity of steel and bloodshed, the bearing of burdens, the trembling for life, and the hot rage of insult—for pestilence would unman them if eyes not unused to men see clear—befall this people, our path is safe. They are sick. The Fountain of Power is a gutter which all may defile; and the voices of the men are overborne by the squealings of mules and the whinnying of barren mares. If through adversity they become wise, then, my brother, strike with and for them, and later, when thou and I are dead, and the disease grows up

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again (the young men bred in the school of fear and trembling and word-confounding have yet to live out their appointed span), those who have fought on the side of the English may ask and receive what they choose. At present seek quietly to confuse, and delay, and evade, and make of no effect. In this business four score of the six hundred are our true helpers.

Now the pen, and the ink, and the hand weary together, as thy eyes will weary in this reading. Be it known to my house that I return soon, but do not speak of the hour. Letters without name have come to me touching my honour. The honour of my house is thine. If they be, as I believe, the work of a dismissed groom, Futteh Lal, that ran at the tail of my wine-coloured Kathiawar stallion, his village is beyond Manglôt; look to it that his tongue no longer lengthens itself on the names of those who are mine. If it be otherwise, put a guard upon my house till I come, and especially see that no sellers of jewellery, astrologers, or midwives have entrance to the women's rooms. We rise by our slaves, and by our slaves we fall, as it was said. To all who are of my remembrance I bring gifts according to their worth. I have written twice of the gift that I would cause to be given to Bahadur Shah.

The blessing of God and his Prophet on thee

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and thine till the end which is appointed. Give me felicity by informing me of the state of thy health. My head is at the Rao Sahib's feet; my sword is at his left side, a little above my heart. Follows my seal.

‘THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD’

‘Or ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a king in Babylon
And you were a Christian slave.’

W. E. Henley.

HIS name was Charlie Mears; he was the only son of his mother who was a widow, and he lived in the north of London, coming into the City every day to work in a bank. He was twenty years old and was full of aspirations. I met him in a public billiard-saloon where the marker called him by his first name, and he called the marker ‘Bullseye.’ Charlie explained, a little nervously, that he had only come to the place to look on, and since looking on at games of skill is not a cheap amusement for the young, I suggested that Charlie should go back to his mother.

That was our first step towards better acquaint-

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ance. He would call on me sometimes in the evenings instead of running about London with his fellow-clerks ; and before long, speaking of himself as a young man must, he told me of his aspirations, which were all literary. He desired to make himself an undying name chiefly through verse, though he was not above sending stories of love and death to the penny-in-the-slot journals. It was my fate to sit still while Charlie read me poems of many hundred lines, and bulky fragments of plays that would surely shake the world. My reward was his unreserved confidence, and the self-revelations and troubles of a young man are almost as holy as those of a maiden. Charlie had never fallen in love, but was anxious to do so on the first opportunity ; he believed in all things good and all things honourable, but at the same time, was curiously careful to let me see that he knew his way about the world as befitted a bank-clerk on twenty-five shillings a week. He rhymed 'dove' with 'love' and 'moon' with 'June,' and devoutly believed that they had never so been rhymed before. The long lame gaps in his plays he filled up with hasty words of apology and description, and swept on, seeing all that he intended to do so clearly that he esteemed it already done, and turned to me for applause.

I fancy that his mother did not encourage his

'FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD'

aspirations ; and I know that his writing-table at home was the edge of his washstand. This he told me almost at the outset of our acquaintance —when he was ravaging my bookshelves, and a little before I was implored to speak the truth as to his chances of 'writing something really great, you know.' Maybe I encouraged him too much, for, one night, he called on me, his eyes flaming with excitement, and said breathlessly :

'Do you mind—can you let me stay here and write all this evening ? I won't interrupt you, I won't really. There's no place for me to write in at my mother's.'

'What's the trouble ?' I said, knowing well what that trouble was.

'I've a notion in my head that would make the most splendid story that was ever written. Do let me write it out here. It's *such* a notion !'

There was no resisting the appeal. I set him a table ; he hardly thanked me, but plunged into his work at once. For half an hour the pen scratched without stopping. Then Charlie sighed and tugged his hair. The scratching grew slower, there were more erasures, and at last ceased. The finest story in the world would not come forth.

'It looks such awful rot now,' he said mournfully. 'And yet it seemed so good when I was thinking about it. What's wrong ?'

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I could not dishearten him by saying the truth. So I answered: 'Perhaps you don't feel in the mood for writing.'

'Yes I do—except when I look at this stuff. Ugh!'

'Read me what you've done,' I said.

He read, and it was wondrous bad, and he paused at all the specially turgid sentences, expecting a little approval; for he was proud of those sentences, as I knew he would be.

'It needs compression,' I suggested cautiously.

'I hate cutting my things down. I don't think you could alter a word here without spoiling the sense. It reads better aloud than when I was writing it.'

'Charlie, you're suffering from an alarming disease afflicting a numerous class. Put the thing by, and tackle it again in a week.'

'I want to do it at once. What do you think of it?'

'How can I judge from a half-written tale? Tell me the story as it lies in your head.'

Charlie told, and in the telling there was everything that his ignorance had so carefully prevented from escaping into the written word. I looked at him, wondering whether it were possible that he did not know the originality, the power of the notion that had come in his way? It was distinctly

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a Notion among notions. Men had been puffed up with pride by ideas not a tithe as excellent and practicable. But Charlie babbled on serenely, interrupting the current of pure fancy with samples of horrible sentences that he purposed to use. I heard him out to the end. It would be folly to allow his thought to remain in his own inept hands, when I could do so much with it. Not all that could be done indeed; but, oh so much!

'What do you think?' he said at last. 'I fancy I shall call it "The Story of a Ship."'

'I think the idea's pretty good; but you won't be able to handle it for ever so long. Now I——'

'Would it be of any use to you? Would you care to take it? I should be proud,' said Charlie promptly.

There are few things sweeter in this world than the guileless, hot-headed, intemperate, open admiration of a junior. Even a woman in her blindest devotion does not fall into the gait of the man she adores, tilt her bonnet to the angle at which he wears his hat, or interlard her speech with his pet oaths. And Charlie did all these things. Still it was necessary to salve my conscience before I possessed myself of Charlie's thoughts.

'Let's make a bargain. I'll give you a fiver for the notion,' I said.

Charlie became a bank-clerk at once.

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‘Oh, that’s impossible. Between two pals, you know, if I may call you so, and speaking as a man of the world, I couldn’t. Take the notion if it’s any use to you. I’ve heaps more.’

He had—none knew this better than I—but they were the notions of other men.

‘Look at it as a matter of business—between men of the world,’ I returned. ‘Five pounds will buy you any number of poetry-books. Business is business, and you may be sure I shouldn’t give that price unless—’

‘Oh, if you put it *that way*,’ said Charlie, visibly moved by the thought of the books. The bargain was clinched with an agreement that he should at unstated intervals come to me with all the notions that he possessed, should have a table of his own to write at, and unquestioned right to inflict upon me all his poems and fragments of poems. Then I said, ‘Now tell me how you came by this idea.’

‘It came by itself.’ Charlie’s eyes opened a little.

‘Yes, but you told me a great deal about the hero that you must have read before somewhere.’

‘I haven’t any time for reading, except when you let me sit here, and on Sundays I’m on my bicycle or down the river all day. There’s nothing wrong about the hero, is there?’

‘Tell me again and I shall understand clearly.

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You say that your hero went pirating. How did he live ?'

'He was on the lower deck of this ship-thing that I was telling you about.'

'What sort of ship ?'

'It was the kind rowed with oars, and the sea spurts through the oar-holes, and the men row sitting up to their knees in water. Then there's a bench running down between the two lines of oars, and an overseer with a whip walks up and down the bench to make the men work.'

'How do you know that ?'

'It's in the tale. There's a rope running overhead, looped to the upper-deck, for the overseer to catch hold of when the ship rolls. When the overseer misses the rope once and falls among the rowers, remember the hero laughs at him and gets licked for it. He's chained to his oar of course—the hero.'

'How is he chained ?'

'With an iron band round his waist fixed to the bench he sits on, and a sort of handcuff on his left wrist chaining him to the oar. He's on the lower deck where the worst men are sent, and the only light comes from the hatchways and through the oar-holes. Can't you imagine the sunlight just squeezing through between the handle and the hole and wobbling about as the ship moves ?'

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'I can, but I can't imagine your imagining it.'

'How could it be any other way? Now you listen to me. The long oars on the upper deck are managed by four men to each bench, the lower ones by three, and the lowest of all by two. Remember it's quite dark on the lowest deck and all the men there go mad. When a man dies at his oar on that deck he isn't thrown overboard, but cut up in his chains and stuffed through the oar-hole in little pieces.'

'Why?' I demanded amazed, not so much at the information as the tone of command in which it was flung out.

'To save trouble and to frighten the others. It needs two overseers to drag a man's body up to the top deck; and if the men at the lower deck oars were left alone, of course they'd stop rowing and try to pull up the benches by all standing up together in their chains.'

'You've a most provident imagination. Where have you been reading about galleys and galley-slaves?'

'Nowhere that I remember. I row a little when I get the chance. But, perhaps, if you say so, I may have read something.'

He went away shortly afterwards to deal with booksellers, and I wondered how a bank-clerk aged twenty could put into my hands with a profligate abundance of detail, all given with absolute assur-

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ance, the story of extravagant and bloodthirsty adventure, riot, piracy, and death in unnamed seas. He had led his hero a desperate dance through revolt against the overseers, to command of a ship of his own, and at last to the establishment of a kingdom on an island ‘somewhere in the sea, you know’; and, delighted with my paltry five pounds, had gone out to buy the notions of other men, that these might teach him how to write. I had the consolation of knowing that this notion was mine by right of purchase, and I thought that I could make something of it.

When next he came to me he was drunk—royally drunk on many poets for the first time revealed to him. His pupils were dilated, his words tumbled over each other, and he wrapped himself in quotations—as a beggar would enfold himself in the purple of emperors. Most of all was he drunk with Longfellow.

‘Isn’t it splendid? Isn’t it superb?’ he cried, after hasty greetings. ‘Listen to this—

“Wouldst thou,”—so the helmsman answered,
“Know the secret of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery.”

By gum!

“Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery,”

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he repeated twenty times, walking up and down the room and forgetting me. 'But I can understand it too,' he said to himself. 'I don't know how to thank you for that fiver. And this; listen—

“I remember the black wharves and the slips
And the sea-tides tossing free;
And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea.”

I haven't braved any dangers, but I feel as if I knew all about it.'

'You certainly seem to have a grip of the sea. Have you ever seen it?'

'When I was a little chap I went to Brighton once; we used to live in Coventry, though, before we came to London. I never saw it,

“When descends on the Atlantic
The gigantic
Storm-wind of the Equinox.”

He shook me by the shoulder to make me understand the passion that was shaking himself.

'When that storm comes,' he continued, 'I think that all the oars in the ship that I was talking about get broken, and the rowers have their chests smashed in by the oar-heads bucking. By the way, have you done anything with that notion of mine yet?'

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‘No. I was waiting to hear more of it from you. Tell me how in the world you’re so certain about the fittings of the ship. You know nothing of ships.’

‘I don’t know. It’s as real as anything to me until I try to write it down. I was thinking about it only last night in bed, after you had lent me *Treasure Island*; and I made up a whole lot of new things to go into the story.’

‘What sort of things?’

‘About the food the men ate; rotten figs and black beans and wine in a skin bag, passed from bench to bench.’

‘Was the ship built so long ago as *that*?’

‘As what? I don’t know whether it was long ago or not. It’s only a notion, but sometimes it seems just as real as if it was true. Do I bother you with talking about it?’

‘Not in the least. Did you make up anything else?’

‘Yes, but it’s nonsense.’ Charlie flushed a little.

‘Never mind; let’s hear about it.’

‘Well, I was thinking over the story, and after awhile I got out of bed and wrote down on a piece of paper the sort of stuff the men might be supposed to scratch on their oars with the edges of their handcuffs. It seemed to make the thing more life-like. It *is* so real to me, y’know.’

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‘Have you the paper on you?’

‘Ye—es, but what’s the use of showing it? It’s only a lot of scratches. All the same, we might have ‘em reproduced in the book on the front page.’

‘I’ll attend to those details. Show me what your men wrote.’

He pulled out of his pocket a sheet of notepaper, with a single line of scratches upon it, and I put this carefully away.

‘What is it supposed to mean in English?’ I said.

‘Oh, I don’t know. I mean it to mean “I’m beastly tired.” It’s great nonsense,’ he repeated, ‘but all those men in the ship seem as real as real people to me. Do do something to the notion soon; I should like to see it written and printed.’

‘But all you’ve told me would make a long book.’

‘Make it then. You’ve only to sit down and write it out.’

‘Give me a little time. Have you any more notions?’

‘Not just now. I’m reading all the books I’ve bought. They’re splendid.’

When he had left I looked at the sheet of notepaper with the inscription upon it. Then I took my head tenderly between both hands, to make

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certain that it was not coming off or turning round. Then . . . but there seemed to be no interval between quitting my rooms and finding myself arguing with a policeman outside a door marked *Private* in a corridor of the British Museum. All I demanded, as politely as possible, was ‘the Greek antiquity man.’ The policeman knew nothing except the rules of the Museum, and it became necessary to forage through all the houses and offices inside the gates. An elderly gentleman called away from his lunch put an end to my search by holding the notepaper between finger and thumb and sniffing at it scornfully.

‘What does this mean? H’m’m,’ said he. ‘So far as I can ascertain it is an attempt to write extremely corrupt Greek on the part’—here he glared at me with intention—‘of an extremely illiterate—ah—person.’ He read slowly from the paper, ‘*Pollock, Erckmann, Tauchnitz, Henniker*’—four names familiar to me.

‘Can you tell me what the corruption is supposed to mean—the gist of the thing?’ I asked.

‘I have been—many times—overcome with weariness in this particular employment. That is the meaning.’ He returned me the paper, and I fled without a word of thanks, explanation, or apology.

I might have been excused for forgetting much.

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To me of all men had been given the chance to write the most marvellous tale in the world, nothing less than the story of a Greek galley-slave, as told by himself. Small wonder that his dreaming had seemed real to Charlie. The Fates that are so careful to shut the doors of each successive life behind us had, in this case, been neglectful, and Charlie was looking, though that he did not know, where never man had been permitted to look with full knowledge since Time began. Above all, he was absolutely ignorant of the knowledge sold to me for five pounds; and he would retain that ignorance, for bank-clerks do not understand metempsychosis, and a sound commercial education does not include Greek. He would supply me—here I capered among the dumb gods of Egypt and laughed in their battered faces—with material to make my tale sure—so sure that the world would hail it as an impudent and vamped fiction. And I—I alone would know that it was absolutely and literally true. I—I alone held this jewel to my hand for the cutting and polishing! Therefore I danced again among the gods of the Egyptian court till a policeman saw me and took steps in my direction.

It remained now only to encourage Charlie to talk, and here there was no difficulty. But I had forgotten those accursed books of poetry. He

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came to me time after time, as useless as a surcharged phonograph—drunk on Byron, Shelley, or Keats. Knowing now what the boy had been in his past lives, and desperately anxious not to lose one word of his babble, I could not hide from him my respect and interest. He misconstrued both into respect for the present soul of Charlie Mears, to whom life was as new as it was to Adam, and interest in his readings ; and stretched my patience to breaking point by reciting poetry—not his own now, but that of others. I wished every English poet blotted out of the memory of mankind. I blasphemed the mightiest names of song because they had drawn Charlie from the path of direct narrative, and would, later, spur him to imitate them ; but I choked down my impatience until the first flood of enthusiasm should have spent itself and the boy returned to his dreams.

‘What’s the use of my telling you what *I* think, when these chaps wrote things for the angels to read ?’ he growled, one evening. ‘Why don’t you write something like theirs ?’

‘I don’t think you’re treating me quite fairly,’ I said, speaking under strong restraint.

‘I’ve given you the story,’ he said shortly, re-plunging into ‘Lara.’

‘But I want the details.’

‘The things I make up about that damned ship

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that you call a galley? They're quite easy. You can just make 'em up for yourself. Turn up the gas a little, I want to go on reading.'

I could have broken the gas globe over his head for his amazing stupidity. I could indeed make up things for myself did I only know what Charlie did not know that he knew. But since the doors were shut behind me I could only wait his youthful pleasure and strive to keep him in good temper. One minute's want of guard might spoil a priceless revelation: now and again he would toss his books aside—he kept them in my rooms, for his mother would have been shocked at the waste of good money had she seen them—and launched into his sea-dreams. Again I cursed all the poets of England. The plastic mind of the bank-clerk had been overlaid, coloured, and distorted by that which he had read, and the result as delivered was a confused tangle of other voices most like the mutter and hum through a City telephone in the busiest part of the day.

He talked of the galley—his own galley had he but known it—with illustrations borrowed from the 'Bride of Abydos.' He pointed the experiences of his hero with quotations from 'The Corsair,' and threw in deep and desperate moral reflections from 'Cain' and 'Manfred,' expecting me to use them all. Only when the talk turned on Longfellow were the

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jarring cross-currents dumb, and I knew that Charlie was speaking the truth as he remembered it.

‘What do you think of this?’ I said one evening, as soon as I understood the medium in which his memory worked best, and, before he could expostulate, read him nearly the whole of ‘The Saga of King Olaf!’

He listened open-mouthed, flushed, his hands drumming on the back of the sofa where he lay, till I came to the Song of Einar Tamberskelver and the verse:—

‘Einar then, the arrow taking
From the loosened string,
Answered, “ That was Norway breaking
’Neath thy hand, O King.” ’

He gasped with pure delight of sound.

‘That’s better than Byron, a little?’ I ventured.
‘Better! Why it’s *true*! How could he have known?’

I went back and repeated: —

“ “What was that?” said Olaf, standing
On the quarter-deck,
“ Something heard I like the stranding
Of a shattered wreck.” ’

‘How could he have known how the ships crash and the oars rip out and go *zzz* all along the line? Why only the other night . . . But go back, please, and read “The Skerry of Shrieks” again.’

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‘No, I’m tired. Let’s talk. What happened the other night?’

‘I had an awful dream about that galley of ours. I dreamed I was drowned in a fight. You see we ran alongside another ship in harbour. The water was dead still except where our oars whipped it up. You know where I always sit in the galley?’ He spoke haltingly at first, under a fine English fear of being laughed at.

‘No. That’s news to me,’ I answered meekly, my heart beginning to beat.

‘On the fourth oar from the bow on the right side on the upper deck. There were four of us at that oar, all chained. I remember watching the water and trying to get my handcuffs off before the row began. Then we closed up on the other ship, and all their fighting men jumped over our bulwarks, and my bench broke and I was pinned down with the three other fellows on top of me, and the big oar jammed across our backs.’

‘Well?’ Charlie’s eyes were alive and alight. He was looking at the wall behind my chair.

‘I don’t know how we fought. The men were trampling all over my back, and I lay low. Then our rowers on the left side—tied to their oars, you know—began to yell and back water. I could hear the water sizzle, and we spun round like a cockchafer, and I knew, lying where I was,

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that there was a galley coming up bow-on to ram us on the left side. I could just lift up my head and see her sail over the bulwarks. We wanted to meet her bow to bow, but it was too late. We could only turn a little bit because the galley on our right had hooked herself on to us and stopped our moving. Then, by gum! there was a crash! Our left oars began to break as the other galley, the moving one y’know, stuck her nose into them. Then the lower-deck oars shot up through the deck planking, butt first, and one of them jumped clear up into the air and came down again close at my head.’

‘How was that managed?’

‘The moving galley’s bow was plunking them back through their own oar-holes, and I could hear no end of a shindy in the decks below. Then her nose caught us nearly in the middle, and we tilted sideways, and the fellows in the right-hand galley unhitched their hooks and ropes, and threw things on to our upper deck—arrows, and hot pitch or something that stung, and we went up and up and up on the left side, and the right side dipped, and I twisted my head round and saw the water stand still as it topped the right bulwarks, and then it curled over and crashed down on the whole lot of us on the right side, and I felt it hit my back, and I woke.’

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‘One minute, Charlie. When the sea topped the bulwarks, what did it look like?’ I had my reasons for asking. A man of my acquaintance had once gone down with a leaking ship in a still sea, and had seen the water-level pause for an instant ere it fell on the deck.

‘It looked just like a banjo-string drawn tight, and it seemed to stay there for years,’ said Charlie.

Exactly! The other man had said: ‘It looked like a silver wire laid down along the bulwarks, and I thought it was never going to break.’ He had paid everything except the bare life for this little valueless piece of knowledge, and I had travelled ten thousand weary miles to meet him and take his knowledge at second hand. But Charlie, the bank-clerk on twenty-five shillings a week, who had never been out of sight of a made road, knew it all. It was no consolation to me that once in his lives he had been forced to die for his gains. I also must have died scores of times, but behind me, because I could have used my knowledge, the doors were shut.

‘And then?’ I said, trying to put away the devil of envy.

‘The funny thing was, though, in all the row I didn’t feel a bit astonished or frightened. It seemed as if I’d been in a good many fights, because I told my next man so when the row

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began. But that cad of an overseer on my deck wouldn’t unloose our chains and give us a chance. He always said that we’d all be set free after a battle, but we never were; we never were.’ Charlie shook his head mournfully.

‘What a scoundrel!’

‘I should say he was. He never gave us enough to eat, and sometimes we were so thirsty that we used to drink salt-water. I can taste that salt-water still.’

‘Now tell me something about the harbour where the fight was fought.’

‘I didn’t dream about that. I know it was a harbour, though; because we were tied up to a ring on a white wall, and all the face of the stone under water was covered with wood to prevent our ram getting chipped when the tide made us rock.’

‘That’s curious. Our hero commanded the galley, didn’t he?’

‘Didn’t he just! He stood by the bows and shouted like a good ’un. He was the man who killed the overseer.’

‘But you were all drowned together, Charlie, weren’t you?’

‘I can’t make that fit quite,’ he said, with a puzzled look. ‘The galley must have gone down with all hands, and yet I fancy that the hero went

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on living afterwards. Perhaps he climbed into the attacking ship. I wouldn't see that, of course. I was dead, you know.'

He shivered slightly and protested that he could remember no more.

I did not press him further, but to satisfy myself that he lay in ignorance of the workings of his own mind, deliberately introduced him to Mortimer Collins's *Transmigration*, and gave him a sketch of the plot before he opened the pages.

'What rot it all is!' he said frankly, at the end of an hour. 'I don't understand his nonsense about the Red Planet Mars and the King, and the rest of it. Chuck me the Longfellow again.'

I handed him the book and wrote out as much as I could remember of his description of the sea-fight, appealing to him from time to time for confirmation of fact or detail. He would answer without raising his eyes from the book, as assuredly as though all his knowledge lay before him on the printed page. I spoke under the normal key of my voice that the current might not be broken, and I knew that he was not aware of what he was saying, for his thoughts were out on the sea with Longfellow.

'Charlie,' I asked, 'when the rowers on the galleys mutinied how did they kill their overseers?'

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'Tore up the benches and brained 'em. That happened when a heavy sea was running. An overseer on the lower deck slipped from the centre plank and fell among the rowers. They choked him to death against the side of the ship with their chained hands quite quietly, and it was too dark for the other overseer to see what had happened. When he asked, he was pulled down too and choked, and the lower deck fought their way up deck by deck, with the pieces of the broken benches banging behind 'em. How they howled!'

'And what happened after that?'

'I don't know. The hero went away—red hair and red beard and all. That was after he had captured our galley, I think.'

The sound of my voice irritated him, and he motioned slightly with his left hand as a man does when interruption jars.

'You never told me he was red-headed before, or that he captured your galley,' I said, after a discreet interval.

Charlie did not raise his eyes.

'He was as red as a red bear,' said he abstractedly. 'He came from the north; they said so in the galley when he looked for rowers—not slaves, but free men. Afterwards—years and years afterwards—news came from another ship, or else he came back—'

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His lips moved in silence. He was rapturously retasting some poem before him.

‘Where had he been, then?’ I was almost whispering that the sentence might come gently to whichever section of Charlie’s brain was working on my behalf.

‘To the Beaches — the Long and Wonderful Beaches !’ was the reply after a minute of silence.

‘To Furdurstrandi?’ I asked, tingling from head to foot.

‘Yes, to Furdurstrandi,’ he pronounced the word in a new fashion. ‘And I too saw——’ The voice failed.

‘Do you know what you have said?’ I shouted incautiously.

He lifted his eyes, fully roused now. ‘No!’ he snapped. ‘I wish you’d let a chap go on reading. Hark to this :—

“But Othere, the old sea captain,
He neither paused nor stirred
Till the king listened, and then
Once more took up his pen
And wrote down every word.

“And to the King of the Saxons
In witness of the truth,
Raising his noble head,
He stretched his brown hand and said,
‘Behold this walrus tooth.’”

By Jove, what chaps those must have been, to go

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sailing all over the shop never knowing where they’d fetch the land! Hah!’

‘Charlie,’ I pleaded, ‘if you’ll only be sensible for a minute or two I’ll make our hero in our tale every inch as good as Othere.’

‘Umph! Longfellow wrote that poem. I don’t care about writing things any more. I want to read.’ He was thoroughly out of tune now, and raging over my own ill-luck, I left him.

Conceive yourself at the door of the world’s treasure-house guarded by a child—an idle, irresponsible child playing knuckle-bones—on whose favour depends the gift of the key, and you will imagine one-half my torment. Till that evening Charlie had spoken nothing that might not lie within the experiences of a Greek galley-slave. But now, or there was no virtue in books, he had talked of some desperate adventure of the Vikings, of Thorfin Karlsefne’s sailing to Wineland, which is America, in the ninth or tenth century. The battle in the harbour he had seen; and his own death he had described. But this was a much more startling plunge into the past. Was it possible that he had skipped half a dozen lives, and was then dimly remembering some episode of a thousand years later? It was a maddening jumble, and the worst of it was that Charlie Mears in his normal condition was the last person in the world

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to clear it up. I could only wait and watch, but I went to bed that night full of the wildest imaginings. There was nothing that was not possible if Charlie's detestable memory only held good.

I might rewrite the *Saga of Thorfin Karlsefne* as it had never been written before, might tell the story of the first discovery of America, myself the discoverer. But I was entirely at Charlie's mercy, and so long as there was a three-and-sixpenny Bohn volume within his reach Charlie would not tell. I dared not curse him openly; I hardly dared jog his memory, for I was dealing with the experiences of a thousand years ago, told through the mouth of a boy of to-day; and a boy of to-day is affected by every change of tone and gust of opinion, so that he must lie even when he most desires to speak the truth.

I saw no more of Charlie for nearly a week. When next I met him it was in Gracechurch Street with a bill-book chained to his waist. Business took him over London Bridge, and I accompanied him. He was very full of the importance of that book and magnified it. As we passed over the Thames we paused to look at a steamer unloading great slabs of white and brown marble. A barge drifted under the steamer's stern and a lonely ship's cow in that barge bellowed. Charlie's face changed from the face of the bank-clerk to that of

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an unknown and—though he would not have believed this—a much shrewder man. He flung out his arm across the parapet of the bridge and laughing very loudly, said:—

'When they heard *our* bulls bellow the Skrœlings ran away!'

I waited only for an instant, but the barge and the cow had disappeared under the bows of the steamer before I answered.

'Charlie, what do you suppose are Skrœlings?'

'Never heard of 'em before. They sound like a new kind of sea-gull. What a chap you are for asking questions,' he replied. 'I have to go to the cashier of the Omnibus Company yonder. Will you wait for me and we can lunch somewhere together? I've a notion for a poem.'

'No, thanks. I'm off. You're sure you know nothing about Skrœlings?'

'Not unless he's been entered for the Liverpool Handicap.' He nodded and disappeared in the crowd.

Now it is written in the Saga of Eric the Red or that of Thorfin Karlsefne, that nine hundred years ago when Karlsefne's galleys came to Leif's booths, which Leif had erected in the unknown land called Markland, which may or may not have been Rhode Island, the Skrœlings—and the Lord He knows who these may or may not have been—

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came to trade with the Vikings, and ran away because they were frightened at the bellowing of the cattle which Thorfin had brought with him in the ships. But what in the world could a Greek slave know of that affair? I wandered up and down among the streets trying to unravel the mystery, and the more I considered it the more baffling it grew. One thing only seemed certain, and that certainty took away my breath for the moment. If I came to full knowledge of anything at all, it would not be one life of the soul in Charlie Mears's body, but half a dozen—half a dozen several and separate existences spent on blue water in the morning of the world!

Then I reviewed the situation.

Obviously if I used my knowledge I should stand alone and unapproachable until all men were as wise as myself. That would be something, but, manlike, I was ungrateful. It seemed bitterly unfair that Charlie's memory should fail me when I needed it most. Great Powers Above—I looked up at them through the fog-smoke—did the Lords of Life and Death know what this meant to me? Nothing less than eternal fame of the best kind, that comes from One, and is shared by one alone. I would be content—remembering Clive, I stood astounded at my own moderation—with the mere right to tell one story, to work out one little

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contribution to the light literature of the day. If Charlie were permitted full recollection for one hour—for sixty short minutes—of existences that had extended over a thousand years—I would forego all profit and honour from all that I should make of his speech. I would take no share in the commotion that would follow throughout the particular corner of the earth that calls itself ‘the world.’ The thing should be put forth anonymously. Nay, I would make other men believe that they had written it. They would hire bull-hided self-advertising Englishmen to bellow it abroad. Preachers would found a fresh conduct of life upon it, swearing that it was new and that they had lifted the fear of death from all mankind. Every Orientalist in Europe would patronise it discursively with Sanskrit and Pali texts. Terrible women would invent unclean variants of the men’s belief for the elevation of their sisters. Churches and religions would war over it. Between the hailing and restarting of an omnibus I foresaw the scuffles that would arise among half a dozen denominations all professing ‘the doctrine of the True Metempsychosis as applied to the world and the New Era’; and saw, too, the respectable English newspapers shying, like frightened kine, over the beautiful simplicity of the tale. The mind leaped forward a hundred—two hundred—

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a thousand years. I saw with sorrow that men would mutilate and garble the story; that rival creeds would turn it upside down till, at last, the western world which clings to the dread of death more closely than the hope of life, would set it aside as an interesting superstition and stampede after some faith so long forgotten that it seemed altogether new. Upon this I changed the terms of the bargain that I would make with the Lords of Life and Death. Only let me know, let me write, the story with sure knowledge that I wrote the truth, and I would burn the manuscript as a solemn sacrifice. Five minutes after the last line was written I would destroy it all. But I must be allowed to write it with absolute certainty.

There was no answer. The flaming colours of an Aquarium poster caught my eye, and I wondered whether it would be wise or prudent to lure Charlie into the hands of the professional mesmerist then, and whether, if he were under his power, he would speak of his past lives. If he did, and if people believed him . . . but Charlie would be frightened and flustered, or made conceited by the interviews. In either case he would begin to lie through fear or vanity. He was safest in my own hands.

‘They are very funny fools, your English,’ said a voice at my elbow, and turning round I recognised

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a casual acquaintance, a young Bengali law student, called Grish Chunder, whose father had sent him to England to become civilised. The old man was a retired native official, and on an income of five pounds a month contrived to allow his son two hundred pounds a year, and the run of his teeth in a city where he could pretend to be the cadet of a royal house, and tell stories of the brutal Indian bureaucrats who ground the faces of the poor.

Grish Chunder was a young, fat, full-bodied Bengali, dressed with scrupulous care in frock coat, tall hat, light trousers, and tan gloves. But I had known him in the days when the brutal Indian Government paid for his university education, and he contributed cheap seditious to the *Sachi Durpan*, and intrigued with the wives of his fourteen-year-old schoolmates.

'That is very funny and very foolish,' he said, nodding at the poster. 'I am going down to the Northbrook Club. Will you come too?'

I walked with him for some time. 'You are not well,' he said. 'What is there on your mind? You do not talk.'

'Grish Chunder, you've been too well educated to believe in a God, haven't you?'

'Oah, yes, *here!* But when I go home I must conciliate popular superstition, and make ceremonies of purification, and my women will anoint idols.'

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‘And hang up *tulsi* and feast the *purohit*, and take you back into caste again, and make a good *khuttri* of you again, you advanced Freethinker. And you’ll eat *desi* food, and like it all, from the smell in the courtyard to the mustard oil over you.’

‘I shall very much like it,’ said Grish Chunder unguardedly. ‘Once a Hindu—always a Hindu. But I like to know what the English think they know.’

‘I’ll tell you something that one Englishman knows. It’s an old tale to you.’

I began to tell the story of Charlie in English, but Grish Chunder put a question in the vernacular, and the history went forward naturally in the tongue best suited for its telling. After all, it could never have been told in English. Grish Chunder heard me, nodding from time to time, and then came up to my rooms, where I finished the tale.

‘*Beshak*,’ he said philosophically. ‘*Lekin darwaza band hai*. (Without doubt; but the door is shut.) I have heard of this remembering of previous existences among my people. It is of course an old tale with us, but, to happen to an Englishman—a cow-fed *Mlechh*—an outcast. By Jove, that is *most* peculiar!’

‘Outcast yourself, Grish Chunder! You eat

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cow-beef every day. Let's think the thing over. The boy remembers his incarnations.'

'Does he know that?' said Grish Chunder quietly, swinging his legs as he sat on my table. He was speaking in his English now.

'He does not know anything. Would I speak to you if he did? Go on!'

'There is no going on at all. If you tell that to your friends they will say you are mad and put it in the papers. Suppose, now, you prosecute for libel.'

'Let's leave that out of the question entirely. Is there any chance of his being made to speak?'

'There is a chance. Oah, yess! But if he spoke it would mean that all this world would end now—*instanto*—fall down on your head. These things are not allowed, you know. As I said, the door is shut.'

'Not a ghost of a chance?'

'How can there be? You are a Christi-án, and it is forbidden to eat, in your books, of the Tree of Life, or else you would never die. How shall you all fear death if you all know what your friend does not know that he knows? I am afraid to be kicked, but I am not afraid to die, because I know what I know. You are not afraid to be kicked, but you are afraid to die. If you were not, by God! you English would be all over

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the shop in an hour, upsetting the balances of power, and making commotions. It would not be good. But no fear. He will remember a little and a little less, and he will call it dreams. Then he will forget altogether. When I passed my First Arts Examination in Calcutta that was all in the cram-book on Wordsworth. "Trailing clouds of glory," you know.'

'This seems to be an exception to the rule.'

'There are no exceptions to rules. Some are not so hard-looking as others, but they are all the same when you touch. If this friend of yours said so-and-so and so-and-so, indicating that he remembered all his lost lives, or one piece of a lost life, he would not be in the bank another hour. He would be what you called sack because he was mad, and they would send him to an asylum for lunatics. You can see that, my friend.'

'Of course I can, but I wasn't thinking of him. His name need never appear in the story.'

'Ah! I see. That story will never be written. You can try.'

'I am going to.'

'For your own credit and for the sake of money, *of course*!'

'No. For the sake of writing the story. On my honour that will be all.'

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'Even then there is no chance. You cannot play with the gods. It is a very pretty story now. As they say, Let it go on that—I mean at that. Be quick ; he will not last long.'

'How do you mean ?'

'What I say. He has never, so far, thought about a woman.'

'Hasn't he, though !' I remembered some of Charlie's confidences.

'I mean no woman has thought about him. When that comes ; *bus—hogya*—all up ! I know. There are millions of women here. Housemaids, for instance. They kiss you behind doors.'

I winced at the thought of my story being ruined by a housemaid. And yet nothing was more probable.

Grish Chunder grinned.

'Yes—also pretty girls—cousins of his house, and perhaps *not* of his house. One kiss that he gives back again and remembers will cure all this nonsense, or else—'

'Or else what ? Remember he does not know that he knows.'

'I know that. Or else, if nothing happens he will become immersed in the trade and the financial speculation like the rest. It must be so. You can see that it must be so. But the woman will come first, *I think*.'

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There was a rap at the door, and Charlie charged in impetuously. He had been released from office, and by the look in his eyes I could see that he had come over for a long talk; most probably with poems in his pockets. Charlie's poems were very wearying, but sometimes they led him to speak about the galley.

Grish Chunder looked at him keenly for a minute.

'I beg your pardon,' Charlie said uneasily; 'I didn't know you had any one with you.'

'I am going,' said Grish Chunder.

He drew me into the lobby as he departed.

'That is your man,' he said quickly. 'I tell you he will never speak all you wish. That is rot—bosh. But he would be most good to make to see things. Suppose now we pretend that it was only play'—I had never seen Grish Chunder so excited—'and pour the ink-pool into his hand. Eh, what do you think? I tell you that he could see *anything* that a man could see. Let me get the ink and the camphor. He is a seer and he will tell us very many things.'

'He may be all you say, but I'm not going to trust him to your gods and devils.'

'It will not hurt him. He will only feel a little stupid and dull when he wakes up. You have seen boys look into the ink-pool before.'

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‘That is the reason why I am not going to see it any more. You’d better go, Grish Chunder.’

He went, insisting far down the staircase that it was throwing away my only chance of looking into the future.

This left me unmoved, for I was concerned for the past, and no peering of hypnotised boys into mirrors and ink-pools would help me to that. But I recognised Grish Chunder’s point of view and sympathised with it.

‘What a big black brute that was!’ said Charlie, when I returned to him. ‘Well, look here, I’ve just done a poem; did it instead of playing dominoes after lunch. May I read it?’

‘Let me read it to myself.’

‘Then you miss the proper expression. Besides, you always make my things sound as if the rhymes were all wrong.’

‘Read it aloud, then. You’re like the rest of ’em.’

Charlie mouthed me his poem, and it was not much worse than the average of his verses. He had been reading his books faithfully, but he was not pleased when I told him that I preferred my Longfellow undiluted with Charlie.

Then we began to go through the MS. line by line, Charlie parrying every objection and correction with:

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‘Yes, that may be better, but you don’t catch what I’m driving at.’

Charlie was, in one way at least, very like one kind of poet.

There was a pencil scrawl at the back of the paper, and ‘What’s that?’ I said.

‘Oh, that’s not poetry at all. It’s some rot I wrote last night before I went to bed, and it was too much bother to hunt for rhymes; so I made it a sort of blank verse instead.’

Here is Charlie’s ‘blank verse’:—

‘We pulled for you when the wind was against us and the sails were low.

Will you never let us go?

We ate bread and onions when you took towns, or ran aboard quickly when you were beaten back by the foe.

The captains walked up and down the deck in fair weather singing songs, but we were below.

We fainted with our chins on the oars and you did not see that we were idle for we still swung to and fro.

Will you never let us go?

The salt made the oar-handles like shark-skin; our knees were cut to the bone with salt cracks; our hair was stuck to our foreheads; and our lips were cut to our gums, and you whipped us because we could not row.

Will you never let us go?

But in a little time we shall run out of the portholes as the water runs along the oar-blade, and though you tell the others to row after us you will never catch us till you catch the oar-thresh and tie up the winds in the belly of the sail. Aho!

Will you never let us go?

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'H'm. What's oar-thresh, Charlie?'

'The water washed up by the oars. That's the sort of song they might sing in the galley y' know. Aren't you ever going to finish that story and give me some of the profits?'

'It depends on yourself. If you had only told me more about your hero in the first instance it might have been finished by now. You're so hazy in your notions.'

'I only want to give you the general notion of it—the knocking about from place to place and the fighting and all that. Can't you fill in the rest yourself? Make the hero save a girl on a pirate-galley and marry her or do something.'

'You're a really helpful collaborator. I suppose the hero went through some few adventures before he married.'

'Well then, make him a very artful card—a low sort of man—a sort of political man who went about making treaties and breaking them—a black-haired chap who hid behind the mast when the fighting began.'

'But you said the other day that he was red-haired.'

'I couldn't have. Make him black-haired of course. You've no imagination.'

Seeing that I had just discovered the entire

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principles upon which the half-memory falsely called imagination is based, I felt entitled to laugh, but forebore for the sake of the tale.

‘You’re right. You’re the man with imagination. A black-haired chap in a decked ship,’ I said.

‘No, an open ship—like a big boat.’

This was maddening.

‘Your ship has been built and designed, closed and decked in; you said so yourself,’ I protested.

‘No, no, not that ship. That was open or half-decked because—— By Jove, you’re right. You made me think of the hero as a red-haired chap. Of course if he were red, the ship would be an open one with painted sails.’

Surely, I thought, he would remember now that he had served in two galleys at least—in a three-decked Greek one under the black-haired ‘political man,’ and again in a Viking’s open sea-serpent under the man ‘red as a red bear’ who went to Markland. The devil prompted me to speak.

‘Why, “of course,” Charlie?’ said I.

‘I don’t know. Are you making fun of me?’

The current was broken for the time being. I took up a note-book and pretended to make many entries in it.

‘It’s a pleasure to work with an imaginative

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chap like yourself,' I said, after a pause. 'The way that you've brought out the character of the hero is simply wonderful.'

'Do you think so?' he answered, with a pleased flush. 'I often tell myself that there's more in me than my mo—— than people think.'

'There's an enormous amount in you.'

'Then, won't you let me send an essay on *The Ways of Bank-Clerks* to *Tit-Bits*, and get the guinea prize?'

'That wasn't exactly what I meant, old fellow: perhaps it would be better to wait a little and go ahead with the galley-story.'

'Ah, but I sha'n't get the credit of that. *Tit-Bits* would publish my name and address if I win. What are you grinning at? They *would*.'

'I know it. Suppose you go for a walk. I want to look through my notes about our story.'

Now this reprehensible youth who left me, a little hurt and put back, might for aught he or I knew have been one of the crew of the Argo—had been certainly slave or comrade to Thorfin Karlsefne. Therefore he was deeply interested in guinea competitions. Remembering what Grish Chunder had said I laughed aloud. The Lords of Life and Death would never allow Charlie Mears to speak with full knowledge of his pasts, and I must even piece out what he had told me with my

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own poor inventions while Charlie wrote of the ways of bank-clerks.

I got together and placed on one file all my notes ; and the net result was not cheering. I read them a second time. There was nothing that might not have been compiled at second-hand from other people's books—except, perhaps, the story of the fight in the harbour. The adventures of a Viking had been written many times before ; the history of a Greek galley-slave was no new thing, and though I wrote both, who could challenge or confirm the accuracy of my details ? I might as well tell a tale of two thousand years hence. The Lords of Life and Death were as cunning as Grish Chunder had hinted. They would allow nothing to escape that might trouble or make easy the minds of men. Though I was convinced of this, yet I could not leave the tale alone. Exaltation followed reaction, not once, but twenty times in the next few weeks. My moods varied with the March sunlight and flying clouds. By night or in the beauty of a spring morning I perceived that I could write that tale and shift continents thereby. In the wet windy afternoons, I saw that the tale might indeed be written, but would be nothing more than a faked, false-varnished, sham-rusted piece of Wardour Street work in the end. Then I blessed Charlie in many ways—though it was no

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fault of his. He seemed to be busy with prize competitions, and I saw less and less of him as the weeks went by and the earth cracked and grew ripe to spring, and the buds swelled in their sheaths. He did not care to read or talk of what he had read, and there was a new ring of self-assertion in his voice. I hardly cared to remind him of the galley when we met; but Charlie alluded to it on every occasion, always as a story from which money was to be made.

'I think I deserve twenty-five per cent, don't I, at least?' he said, with beautiful frankness. 'I supplied all the ideas, didn't I?'

This greediness for silver was a new side in his nature. I assumed that it had been developed in the City, where Charlie was picking up the curious nasal drawl of the underbred City man.

'When the thing's done we'll talk about it. I can't make anything of it at present. Red-haired or black-haired heroes are equally difficult.'

He was sitting by the fire staring at the red coals. 'I can't understand what you find so difficult. It's all as clear as mud to me,' he replied. A jet of gas puffed out between the bars, took light, and whistled softly. 'Suppose we take the red-haired hero's adventures first, from the time that he came south to my galley and captured it and sailed to the Beaches.'

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I knew better now than to interrupt Charlie. I was out of reach of pen and paper, and dared not move to get them lest I should break the current. The gas-jet puffed and whinnied, Charlie's voice dropped almost to a whisper, and he told a tale of the sailing of an open galley to Furdurstrandi, of sunsets on the open sea, seen under the curve of the one sail evening after evening when the galley's beak was notched into the centre of the sinking disc, and 'we sailed by that for we had no other guide,' quoth Charlie. He spoke of a landing on an island and explorations in its woods, where the crew killed three men whom they found asleep under the pines. Their ghosts, Charlie said, followed the galley, swimming and choking in the water, and the crew cast lots and threw one of their number overboard as a sacrifice to the strange gods whom they had offended. Then they ate sea-weed when their provisions failed, and their legs swelled, and their leader, the red-haired man, killed two rowers who mutinied, and after a year spent among the woods they set sail for their own country, and a wind that never failed carried them back so safely that they all slept at night. This, and much more Charlie told. Sometimes the voice fell so low that I could not catch the words, though every nerve was on the strain. He spoke of their leader, the red-haired man, as a pagan speaks of

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his God; for it was he who cheered them and slew them impartially as he thought best for their needs; and it was he who steered them for three days among floating ice, each floe crowded with strange beasts that ‘tried to sail with us,’ said Charlie, ‘and we beat them back with the handles of the oars.’

The gas-jet went out, a burnt coal gave way, and the fire settled with a tiny crash to the bottom of the grate. Charlie ceased speaking, and I said no word.

‘By Jove!’ he said at last, shaking his head. ‘I’ve been staring at the fire till I’m dizzy. What was I going to say?’

‘Something about the galley-book.’

‘I remember now. It’s twenty-five per cent of the profits, isn’t it?’

‘It’s anything you like when I’ve done the tale.’

‘I wanted to be sure of that. I must go now. I’ve—I’ve an appointment.’ And he left me.

Had not my eyes been held I might have known that that broken muttering over the fire was the swan-song of Charlie Mears. But I thought it the prelude to fuller revelation. At last and at last I should cheat the Lords of Life and Death!

When next Charlie came to me I received him with rapture. He was nervous and embarrassed,

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but his eyes were very full of light, and his lips a little parted.

‘I’ve done a poem,’ he said ; and then, quickly : ‘It’s the best I’ve ever done. Read it.’ He thrust it into my hand and retreated to the window.

I groaned inwardly. It would be the work of half an hour to criticise—that is to say, praise—the poem sufficiently to please Charlie. Then I had good reason to groan, for Charlie, discarding his favourite centipede metres, had launched into shorter and choppier verse, and verse with a motive at the back of it. This is what I read :—

‘The day is most fair, the cheery wind
 Hallos behind the hill,
Where he bends the wood as seemeth good,
 And the sapling to his will !
Riot, O wind ; there is that in my blood
 That would not have thee still !

‘She gave me herself, O Earth, O Sky ;
 Gray sea, she is mine alone !
Let the sullen boulders hear my cry,
 And rejoice tho’ they be but stone !

‘Mine ! I have won her, O good brown earth,
 Make merry ! ‘Tis hard on Spring ;
Make merry ; my love is doubly worth
 All worship your fields can bring !
Let the hind that tills you feel my mirth
 At the early harrowing !’

‘Yes, it’s the early harrowing, past a doubt,’ I

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said, with a dread at my heart. Charlie smiled, but did not answer.

‘Red cloud of the sunset, tell it abroad;
I am victor. Greet me, O Sun,
Dominant master and absolute lord
Over the soul of one !’

‘Well?’ said Charlie, looking over my shoulder. I thought it far from well, and very evil indeed, when he silently laid a photograph on the paper—the photograph of a girl with a curly head and a foolish slack mouth.

‘Isn’t it—isn’t it wonderful?’ he whispered, pink to the tips of his ears, wrapped in the rosy mystery of first love. ‘I didn’t know; I didn’t think—it came like a thunderclap.’

‘Yes. It comes like a thunderclap. Are you very happy, Charlie?’

‘My God—she—she loves me!’ He sat down repeating the last words to himself. I looked at the hairless face, the narrow shoulders already bowed by desk-work, and wondered when, where, and how he had loved in his past lives.

‘What will your mother say?’ I asked cheerfully.

‘I don’t care a damn what she says!’

At twenty the things for which one does not care a damn should, properly, be many, but one must not include mothers in the list. I told him

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this gently; and he described Her, even as Adam must have described to the newly-named beasts the glory and tenderness and beauty of Eve. Incidentally I learned that She was a tobacconist's assistant with a weakness for pretty dress, and had told him four or five times already that She had never been kissed by a man before.

Charlie spoke on and on, and on; while I, separated from him by thousands of years, was considering the beginnings of things. Now I understood why the Lords of Life and Death shut the doors so carefully behind us. It is that we may not remember our first and most beautiful wooings. Were this not so, our world would be without inhabitants in a hundred years.

‘Now, about that galley-story,’ I said still more cheerfully, in a pause in the rush of the speech.

Charlie looked up as though he had been hit. ‘The galley—what galley? Good heavens, don’t joke, man! This is serious! You don’t know how serious it is! ’

Grish Chunder was right. Charlie had tasted the love of woman that kills remembrance, and the finest story in the world would never be written.

HIS PRIVATE HONOUR

THE autumn batch of recruits for the Old Regiment had just been uncartered. As usual they were said to be the worst draft that had ever come from the Depôt. Mulvaney looked them over, grunted scornfully, and immediately reported himself very sick.

‘Is it the regular autumn fever?’ said the doctor, who knew something of Terence’s ways. ‘Your temperature’s normal.’

‘Tis wan hundred and thirty-seven rookies to the bad, sorr. I’m not very sick now, but I will be dead if these boys are thrown at me in my rejuced condition. Doctor, dear, supposin’ you was in charge of three cholera camps an’——’

‘Go to hospital then, you old contriver,’ said the doctor, laughing.

Terence bundled himself into a blue bedgown,—Dinah Shadd was away attending to a major’s lady, who preferred Dinah without a diploma to anybody else with a hundred,—put a pipe in his

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teeth, and paraded the hospital balcony, exhorting Ortheris to be a father to the new recruits.

‘They’re mostly your own sort, little man,’ he said, with a grin; ‘the top-spit av Whitechapel. I’ll interogue them whin they’re more like something they never will be,—an’ that’s a good honest soldier like me.’

Ortheris yapped indignantly. He knew as well as Terence what the coming work meant, and he thought Terence’s conduct mean. Then he strolled off to look at the new cattle, who were staring at the unfamiliar landscape with large eyes, and asking if the kites were eagles and the pariah-dogs jackals.

‘Well, you are a holy set of bean-faced beggars, *you are*,’ he said genially to a knot in the barrack square. Then, running his eye over them,—‘Fried fish an’ whelks is about your sort. Blimy if they haven’t sent some pink-eyed Jews too. You chap with the greasy ’ed, which o’ the Solomons was your father, Moses?’

‘My name’s Anderson,’ said a voice suilenly.

‘Oh, Samuelson! All right, Samuelson! An’ ‘ow many o’ the likes o’ you Sheenies are comin’ to spoil B Company?’

There is no scorn so complete as that of the old soldier for the new. It is right that this should be so. A recruit must learn first that he

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is not a man but a thing, which in time, and by the mercy of Heaven, may develop into a soldier of the Queen if it takes care and attends to good advice. Ortheris's tunic was open, his cap over-lopped one eye, and his hands were behind his back as he walked round, growing more contemptuous at each step. The recruits did not dare to answer, for they were new boys in a strange school, who had called themselves soldiers at the Dépôt in comfortable England.

'Not a single pair o' shoulders in the whole lot. I've seen some bad drafts in my time,—some bloomin' bad drafts; but this 'ere draft beats any draft I've ever known. Jock, come an' look at these squidgy, ham-shanked beggars.'

Learoyd was walking across the square. He arrived slowly, circled round the knot as a whale circles round a shoal of small fry, said nothing, and went away whistling.

'Yes, you may well look sheepy,' Ortheris squeaked to the boys. 'It's the likes of you breaks the 'earts of the likes of us. We've got to lick you into shape, and never a ha'penny extry do we get for so doin', and you ain't never grateful neither. Don't you go thinkin' it's the Colonel nor yet the company orf'cer that makes you. It's *us*, you Johnnie Raws—*you Johnnie bloomin' Raws!*'

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A company officer had come up unperceived behind Ortheris at the end of this oration. 'You may be right, Ortheris,' he said quietly, 'but I shouldn't shout it.' The recruits grinned as Ortheris saluted and collapsed.

Some days afterwards I was privileged to look over the new batch, and they were everything that Ortheris had said, and more. B Company had been devastated by forty or fifty of them; and B Company's drill on parade was a sight to shudder at. Ortheris asked them lovingly whether they had not been sent out by mistake, and whether they had not better post themselves back to their friends. Learoyd thrashed them methodically one by one, without haste but without slovenliness; and the older soldiers took the remnants from Learoyd and went over them in their own fashion. Mulvaney stayed in hospital, and grinned from the balcony when Ortheris called him a shirker and other worse names.

'By the grace av God we'll brew men av them yet,' Terence said one day. 'Be vartuous an' parsevere, me son. There's the makin's av colonels in that mob if we only go deep enough—wid a belt.'

'We!' Ortheris replied, dancing with rage. 'I just love you and your "we's." 'Ere's B Company drillin' like a drunk Militia reg'ment.'

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‘So I’ve been officially acquent,’ was the answer from on high; ‘but I’m too sick this tide to make certain.’

‘An’ you, you fat H’irishman, sniftin’ an’ shirkin’ up there among the arreroott an’ the sago!’

‘An’ the port wine,—you’ve forgot the port wine, Orth’ris: ‘tis none so bad.’ Terence smacked his lips provokingly.

‘And we’re wore off our feet with these ’ere—kangaroos. Come out o’ that, an’ earn your pay. Come on down outer that, an’ *do* somethin’, ‘stead o’ grinnin’ up there like a Jew monkey, you frowsy’eaded Fenian!’

‘When I’m better av my various complaints I’ll have a little private talkin’ wid you. In the meanwhile,—duck!’

Terence flung an empty medicine bottle at Ortheris’s head and dropped into a long chair, and Ortheris came to tell me his opinion of Mulvaney three times over,—each time entirely varying all the words.

‘There’ll be a smash one o’ these days,’ he concluded. ‘Well, it’s none o’ my fault, but it’s ‘ard on B Company.’

It was very hard on B Company, for twenty seasoned men cannot push twice that number of fools into their places and keep their own places at the

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same time. The recruits should have been more evenly distributed through the regiment, but it seemed good to the Colonel to mass them in a company where there was a fair proportion of old soldiers. He found his reward early one morning when the battalion was advancing by companies in echelon from the right. The order was given to form company squares, which are compact little bricks of men very unpleasant for a line of charging cavalry to deal with. B Company was on the left flank, and had ample time to know what was going on. For that reason, presumably, it gathered itself into a thing like a decayed aloe-clump, the bayonets pointing anywhere in general and nowhere in particular; and in that clump, roundel, or mob, it stayed till the dust had gone down and the Colonel could see and speak. He did both, and the speaking part was admitted by the regiment to be the finest thing that the 'old man' had ever risen to since one delightful day at a sham-fight, when a cavalry division had occasion to walk over his line of skirmishers. He said, almost weeping, that he had given no order for rallying groups, and that he preferred to see a little dressing among the men occasionally. He then apologised for having mistaken B Company for men. He said that they were but weak little children, and that since he could not offer them each a perambulator

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and a nursemaid (this may sound comic to read, but B Company heard it by word of mouth and winced) perhaps the best thing for them to do would be to go back to squad-drill. To that end he proposed sending them, out of their turn, to garrison duty in Fort Amara, five miles away,—D Company were next for this detestable duty and nearly cheered the Colonel. There he devoutly hoped that their own subalterns would drill them to death, as they were of no use in their present life.

It was an exceedingly painful scene, and I made haste to be near B Company barracks when parade was dismissed and the men were free to talk. There was no talking at first, because each old soldier took a new draft and kicked him very severely. The non-commissioned officers had neither eyes nor ears for these accidents. They left the barracks to themselves, and Ortheris improved the occasion by a speech. I did not hear that speech, but fragments of it were quoted for weeks afterwards. It covered the birth, parentage, and education of every man in the company by name: it gave a complete account of Fort Amara from a sanitary and social point of view; and it wound up with an abstract of the whole duty of a soldier, each recruit his use in life, and Ortheris's views on the use and fate of the recruits of B Company.

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‘You can’t drill, you can’t walk, you can’t shoot,—you,—you awful rookies! Wot’s the good of you? You eats and you sleeps, and you eats, and you goes to the doctor for medicine when your innards is out o’ order for all the world as if you was bloomin’ generals. An’ now you’ve topped it all, you bats’-eyed beggars, with getting us druv out to that stinkin’ Fort ’Ammerer. We’ll fort you when we get out there; yes, an’ we’ll ’ammer you too. Don’t you think you’ve come into the H’army to drink Heno, an’ club your comp’ny, an’ lie on your cots an’ scratch your fat heads. You can do that at ‘ome sellin’ matches, which is all you’re fit for, you keb-huntin’, penny - toy, bootlace, baggage - tout, ‘orse - ‘oldin’, sandwich-backed se-werss, you.¹ I’ve spoke you as fair as I know ‘ow, and you give good ‘eed, ‘cause if Mulvaney stops skrimshanking—gets out o’ ‘orspital—when we’re in the Fort, I lay your lives will be trouble to you.’

That was Ortheris’s peroration, and it caused B Company to be christened the Boot-black Brigade. With this disgrace on their slack shoulders they went to garrison duty at Fort Amara with their officers, who were under instructions to twist their little tails. The army, unlike every other profession, cannot be taught through shilling books.

¹ Ortheris meant *soors*—which means pigs.

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First a man must suffer, then he must learn his work, and the self-respect that that knowledge brings. The learning is hard, in a land where the army is not a red thing that walks down the street to be looked at, but a living tramping reality that may be needed at the shortest notice, when there is no time to say, 'Hadn't you better?' and 'Won't you please?'

The company officers divided themselves into three. When Brander the captain was wearied, he gave over to Maydew, and when Maydew was hoarse he ordered the junior subaltern Ouless to bucket the men through squad and company drill, till Brander could go on again. Out of parade hours the old soldiers spoke to the recruits as old soldiers will, and between the four forces at work on them, the new draft began to stand on their feet and feel that they belonged to a good and honourable service. This was proved by their once or twice resenting Ortheris's technical lectures.

'Drop it now, lad,' said Learoyd, coming to the rescue. 'Th' pups are biting back. They're none so rotten as we looked for.'

'Ho! Yes. You think yourself soldiers now, 'cause you don't fall over each other on p'rade, don't you? You think 'cause the dirt don't cake off you week's end to week's end that you're

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clean men. You think 'cause you can fire your rifle without more nor shuttin' both eyes, you're something to fight, don't you? You'll know later on,' said Ortheris to the barrack-room generally. 'Not but what you're a little better than you was,' he added, with a gracious wave of his cutty.

It was in this transition-stage that I came across the new draft once more. Their officers, in the zeal of youth forgetting that the old soldiers who stiffened the sections must suffer equally with the raw material under hammering, had made all a little stale and unhandy with continuous drill in the square, instead of marching the men into the open and supplying them with skirmishing drill. The month of garrison-duty in the Fort was nearly at an end, and B Company were quite fit for a self-respecting regiment to drill with. They had no style or spring,—that would come in time, —but so far as they went they were passable. I met Maydew one day and inquired after their health. He told me that young Ouless was putting a polish on a half-company of them in the great square by the east bastion of the Fort that afternoon. Because the day was Saturday I went off to taste the full beauty of leisure in watching another man hard at work.

The fat forty-pound muzzle-loaders on the east bastion made a very comfortable resting-place.

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You could sprawl full length on the iron warmed by the afternoon sun to blood heat, and command an easy view of the parade-ground which lay between the powder-magazine and the curtain of the bastion.

I saw a half-company called over and told off for drill, saw Ouless come from his quarters, tugging at his gloves, and heard the first '*Shun!*' that locks the ranks and shows that work has begun. Then I went off on my own thoughts; the squeaking of the boots and the rattle of the rifles making a good accompaniment, and the line of red coats and black trousers a suitable back-ground to them all. They concerned the formation of a territorial army for India,—an army of specially paid men enlisted for twelve years' service in Her Majesty's Indian possessions, with the option of extending on medical certificates for another five and the certainty of a pension at the end. They would be such an army as the world had never seen,—one hundred thousand trained men drawing annually five, no, fifteen thousand men from England, making India their home, and allowed to marry in reason. Yes, I thought, watching the line shift to and fro, break and re-form, we would buy back Cashmere from the drunken imbecile who was turning it into a hell, and there we would plant our much-married regiments,—the men who had served ten years of

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their time,—and there they should breed us white soldiers, and perhaps a second fighting-line of Eurasians. At all events Cashmere was the only place in India that the Englishman could colonise, and if we had foothold there we could . . . Oh, it was a beautiful dream! I left that territorial army swelled to a quarter of a million men far behind, swept on as far as an independent India, hiring warships from the mother-country, guarding Aden on the one side and Singapore on the other, paying interest on her loans with beautiful regularity, but borrowing no men from beyond her own borders—a colonised, manufacturing India with a permanent surplus and her own flag. I had just installed myself as Viceroy, and by virtue of my office had shipped four million sturdy thrifty natives to the Malayan Archipelago, where labour is always wanted and the Chinese pour in too quickly, when I became aware that things were not going smoothly with the half-company. There was a great deal too much shuffling and shifting and ‘as you wereing.’ The non-commissioned officers were snapping at the men, and I fancied Ouless backed one of his orders with an oath. He was in no position to do this, because he was a junior who had not yet learned to pitch his word of command in the same key twice running. Sometimes he squeaked, and sometimes he grunted;

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and a clear full voice with a ring in it has more to do with drill than people think. He was nervous both on parade and in mess, because he was unproven and knew it. One of his majors had said in his hearing, ‘Ouless has a skin or two to slough yet, and he hasn’t the sense to be aware of it.’ That remark had stayed in Ouless’s mind and caused him to think about himself in little things, which is not the best training for a young man. He tried to be cordial at mess, and became over-effusive. Then he tried to stand on his dignity, and appeared sulky and boorish. He was only hunting for the just medium and the proper note, and had found neither because he had never faced himself in a big thing. With his men he was as ill at ease as he was with his mess, and his voice betrayed him. I heard two orders and then:—‘Sergeant, what *is* that rear-rank man doing, damn him?’ That was sufficiently bad. A company officer ought not to ask sergeants for information. He commands, and commands are not held by syndicates.

It was too dusty to see the drill accurately, but I could hear the excited little voice pitching from octave to octave, and the uneasy ripple of badgered or bad-tempered files running down the ranks. Ouless had come on parade as sick of his duty as were the men of theirs. The hot sun had told on

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everybody's temper, but most of all on the youngest man's. He had evidently lost his self-control, and not possessing the nerve or the knowledge to break off till he had recovered it again, was making bad worse by ill-language.

The men shifted their ground and came close under the gun I was lying on. They were wheeling quarter-right and they did it very badly, in the natural hope of hearing Ouless swear again. He could have taught them nothing new, but they enjoyed the exhibition. Instead of swearing Ouless lost his head completely, and struck out nervously at the wheeling flank-man with a little Malacca riding-cane that he held in his hand for a pointer. The cane was topped with thin silver over lacquer, and the silver had worn through in one place, leaving a triangular flap sticking up. I had just time to see that Ouless had thrown away his commission by striking a soldier, when I heard the rip of cloth and a piece of gray shirt showed under the torn scarlet on the man's shoulder. It had been the merest nervous flick of an exasperated boy, but quite enough to forfeit his commission, since it had been dealt in anger to a volunteer and no pressed man, who could not under the rules of the service reply. The effect of it, thanks to the natural depravity of things, was as though Ouless had cut the man's coat off his back. Knowing the

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new draft by reputation, I was fairly certain that every one of them would swear with many oaths that Ouless had actually thrashed the man. In that case Ouless would do well to pack his trunk. His career as a servant of the Queen in any capacity was ended. The wheel continued, and the men halted and dressed immediately opposite my resting-place. Ouless's face was perfectly bloodless. The flanking man was a dark red, and I could see his lips moving in wicked words. He was Ortheris! After seven years' service and three medals, he had been struck by a boy younger than himself! Further, he was my friend and a good man, a proved man, and an Englishman. The shame of the thing made me as hot as it made Ouless cold, and if Ortheris had slipped in a cartridge and cleared the account at once I should have rejoiced. The fact that Ortheris, of all men, had been struck, proved that the boy could not have known whom he was hitting; but he should have remembered that he was no longer a boy. And then I was sorry for him, and then I was angry again, and Ortheris stared in front of him and grew redder and redder.

The drill halted for a moment. No one knew why, for not three men could have seen the insult, the wheel being end-on to Ouless at the time. Then, led, I conceived, by the hand of Fate,

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Brander, the captain, crossed the drill-ground, and his eye was caught by not more than a square foot of gray shirt over a shoulder-blade that should have been covered by well-fitting tunic.

‘Heavens and earth!’ he said, crossing in three strides. ‘Do you let your men come on parade in rags, sir? What’s that scarecrow doing here? Fall out, that flank-man. What do you mean by —— *You, Ortheris!* of all men. What the deuce do you mean?’

‘Beg y’ pardon, sir,’ said Ortheris. ‘I scratched it against the guard-gate running up to parade.’

‘Scratched it! Ripped it up, you mean. It’s half off your back.’

‘It was a little tear at first, sir, but in portin’ arms it got stretched, sir, an’—an’ I can’t look be’ind me. I felt it givin’, sir.’

‘Hm!’ said Brander. ‘I should think you did feel it give. I thought it was one of the new draft. You’ve a good pair of shoulders. Go on!’

He turned to go. Ouless stepped after him, very white, and said something in a low voice.

‘Hey, what? What? Ortheris,’ the voice dropped. I saw Ortheris salute, say something, and stand at attention.

‘Dismiss,’ said Brander curtly. The men were dismissed. ‘I can’t make this out. You say ——?’ he nodded at Ouless, who said something

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again. Ortheris stood still, the torn flap of his tunic falling nearly to his waist-belt. He had, as Brander said, a good pair of shoulders, and prided himself on the fit of his tunic.

‘Beg y’ pardon, sir,’ I heard him say, ‘but I think Lieutenant Ouless has been in the sun too long. He don’t quite remember things, sir. I come on p’rade with a bit of a rip, and it spread, sir, through portin’ arms, as I ’ave said, sir.’

Brander looked from one face to the other and I suppose drew his own conclusions, for he told Ortheris to go with the other men who were flocking back to barracks. Then he spoke to Ouless and went away, leaving the boy in the middle of the parade-ground fumbling with his sword-knot.

He looked up, saw me lying on the gun, and came to me biting the back of his gloved forefinger, so completely thrown off his balance that he had not sense enough to keep his trouble to himself.

‘I say, you saw that, I suppose?’ He jerked his head back to the square, where the dust left by the departing men was settling down in white circles.

‘I did,’ I answered, for I was not feeling polite.

‘What the devil ought I to do?’ He bit his finger again. ‘I told Brander what I had done. I hit him.’

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‘I’m perfectly aware of that,’ I said, ‘and I don’t suppose Ortheris has forgotten it already.’

‘Ye—es; but I’m dashed if I know what I ought to do. Exchange into another company, I suppose. I can’t ask the man to exchange, I suppose. Hey?’

The suggestion showed the glimmerings of proper sense, but he should not have come to me or any one else for help. It was his own affair, and I told him so. He seemed unconvinced, and began to talk of the possibilities of being cashiered. At this point the spirit moved me, on behalf of the unavenged Ortheris, to paint him a beautiful picture of his insignificance in the scheme of creation. He had a papa and a mamma seven thousand miles away, and perhaps some friends. They would feel his disgrace, but no one else would care a penny. He would be only Lieutenant Ouless of the Old Regiment dismissed the Queen’s service for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The Commander-in-Chief, who would confirm the orders of the court-martial, would not know who he was; his mess would not speak of him; he would return to Bombay, if he had money enough to go home, more alone than when he had come out. Finally,—I rounded the sketch with precision,—he was only one tiny dab of red in the vast gray field of the Indian Empire. He must

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work this crisis out alone, and no one could help him, and no one cared—(this was untrue, because I cared immensely; he had spoken the truth to Brander on the spot)—whether he pulled through it or did not pull through it. At last his face set and his figure stiffened.

‘Thanks, that’s quite enough. I don’t want to hear any more,’ he said in a dry grating voice, and went to his own quarters.

Brander spoke to me afterwards and asked me some absurd question—whether I had seen Ouless cut the coat off Ortheris’s back. I knew that jagged silver of silver would do its work well, but I contrived to impress on Brander the completeness, the wonderful completeness, of my disassociation from that drill. I began to tell him all about my dreams for the new territorial army in India, and he left me.

I could not see Ortheris for some days, but I learnt that when he returned to his fellows he had told the story of the blow in vivid language. Samuelson, the Jew, then asserted that it was not good enough to live in a regiment where you were drilled off your feet and knocked about like a dog. The remark was a perfectly innocent one, and exactly tallied with Ortheris’s expressed opinions. Yet Ortheris had called Samuelson an unmentionable Jew, had accused him of kicking women on

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the head in London, and howling under the cat, had hustled him, as a bantam hustles a barn-door cock, from one end of the barrack-room to the other, and finally had heaved every single article of Samuelson's valise and bedding-roll into the veranda and the outer dirt, kicking Samuelson every time that the bewildered creature stooped to pick anything up. My informant could not account for this inconsistency, but it seemed to me that Ortheris was working off his temper.

Mulvaney had heard the story in hospital. First his face clouded, then he spat, and then laughed. I suggested that he had better return to active duty, but he saw it in another light, and told me that Ortheris was quite capable of looking after himself and his own affairs. 'An' if I did come out,' said Terence, 'like as not I would be catchin' young Ouless by the scruff av his trousies an' makin' an example av him before the men. Whin Dinah came back I would be under court-martial, an' all for the sake av a little bit av a bhoy that'll make an orf'cer yet. What's he goin' to do, sorr, do ye know?'

'Which?' said I.

'Ouless, av course. I've no fear for the *man*. Begad, tho', if ut had come to me—but ut could not have so come—I'd ha' made him cut his wisdom-teeth on his own sword-hilt.'

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'I don't think he knows himself what he means to do,' I said.

'I should not wonder,' said Terence. 'There's a dale av thinkin' before a young man whin he's done wrong an' knows ut, an' is studyin' how to put ut right. Give the word from me to our little man there, that if he had ha' told on his shuperior orf'cer I'd ha' come out to Fort Amara to kick him into the Fort ditch, an' that's a forty-fut drop.'

Ortheris was not in good condition to talk to. He wandered up and down with Learoyd brooding, so far as I could see, over his lost honour, and using, as I could hear, incendiary language. Learoyd would nod and spit and smoke and nod again, and he must have been a great comfort to Ortheris—almost as great a comfort as Samuelson, whom Ortheris bullied disgracefully. If the Jew opened his mouth in the most casual remark Ortheris would plunge down it with all arms and accoutrements, while the barrack-room stared and wondered.

Ouless had retired into himself to meditate. I saw him now and again, and he avoided me because I had witnessed his shame and spoken my mind on it. He seemed dull and moody, and found his half-company anything but pleasant to drill. The men did their work and gave him very little

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trouble, but just when they should have been feeling their feet, and showing that they felt them by spring and swing and snap, the elasticity died out, and it was only drilling with war-game blocks. There is a beautiful little ripple in a well-made line of men, exactly like the play of a perfectly-tempered sword. Ouless's half-company moved as a broom-stick moves, and would have broken as easily.

I was speculating whether Ouless had sent money to Ortheris, which would have been bad, or had apologised to him in private, which would have been worse, or had decided to let the whole affair slide, which would have been worst of all, when orders came to me to leave the station for a while. I had not spoken directly to Ortheris, for his honour was not my honour, and he was its only guardian, and he would not say anything except bad words.

I went away, and from time to time thought a great deal of that subaltern and that private in Fort Amara, and wondered what would be the upshot of everything.

When I returned it was early spring. B Company had been shifted from the Fort to regular duty in cantonments, the roses were getting ready to bud on the Mall, and the regiment, which had been at a camp of exercise among other things,

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was going through its spring musketry-course under an adjutant who had a notion that its shooting average was low. He had stirred up the company officers and they had bought extra ammunition for their men—the Government allowance is just sufficient to foul the rifling—and E Company, which counted many marksmen, was vapouring and offering to challenge all the other companies, and the third-class shots were very sorry that they had ever been born, and all the subalterns were a rich ripe saddle-colour from sitting at the butts six and eight hours a day.

I went off to the butts after breakfast very full of curiosity to see how the new draft had come forward. Ouless was there with his men by the bald hillock that marks the six hundred yards' range, and the men were in gray-green *khaki*, that shows the best points of a soldier and shades off into every background he may stand against. Before I was in hearing distance I could see, as they sprawled on the dusty grass, or stood up and shook themselves, that they were men made over again—wearing their helmets with the cock of self-possession, swinging easily, and jumping to the word of command. Coming nearer, I heard Ouless whistling *Ballyhooley* between his teeth as he looked down the range with his binoculars, and the back of Lieutenant Ouless was the back of

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a free man and an officer. He nodded as I came up, and I heard him fling an order to a non-commissioned officer in a sure and certain voice. The flag ran up from the target, and Ortheris threw himself down on his stomach to put in his ten shots. He winked at me over the breech-block as he settled himself, with the air of a man who has to go through tricks for the benefit of children.

‘Watch, you men,’ said Ouless to the squad behind. ‘He’s half your weight, Brannigan, but he isn’t afraid of his rifle.’

Ortheris had his little affectations and pet ways as the rest of us have. He weighed his rifle, gave it a little kick-up, cuddled down again, and fired across the ground that was beginning to dance in the sun-heat.

‘Miss!’ said a man behind.

‘Too much bloomin’ background in front,’ Ortheris muttered.

‘I should allow two feet for refraction,’ said Ouless.

Ortheris fired again, made his outer, crept in, found the bull and stayed there; the non-commissioned officer pricking off the shots.

‘Can’t make out ‘ow I missed that first,’ he said, rising, and stepping back to my side, as Learoyd took his place.

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‘Is it company practice?’ I asked.

‘No. Only just knockin’ about. Ouless, ’e’s givin’ ten rupees for second-class shots. I’m outer it, of course, but I come on to show ’em the proper style o’ doin’ things. Jock looks like a sea-lion at the Brighton Aquarium sprawlin’ an’ crawlin’ down there, don’t ’e? Gawd, what a butt this end of ’im would make.’

‘B Company has come up very well,’ I said.

‘They ’ad to. They’re none so dusty now, are they? Samuelson even, ’e can shoot sometimes. We’re gettin’ on as well as can be expected, thank you.’

‘How do you get on with——?’

‘Oh, ’im! First-rate! There’s nothin’ wrong with ’im.’

‘Was it all settled then?’

‘Asn’t Terence told you? I should say it was. ’E’s a gentleman, ’e is.’

‘Let’s hear,’ I said.

Ortheris twinkled all over, tucked his rifle across his knees and repeated, ‘’E’s a gentleman. ’E’s an officer too. You saw all that mess in Fort Ammerer. ’Twasn’t none o’ *my* fault, as you can guess. Only some goat in the drill judged it was be’aviour or something to play the fool on p’rade. That’s why we drilled so bad. When ’e ’it me, I was so took aback I couldn’t do nothing, an’ when

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I wished for to knock 'im down the wheel 'ad gone on, an' I was facin' you there lyin' on the guns. After the captain had come up an' was raggin' me about my tunic bein' tore, I saw the young beggar's eye, an' 'fore I could 'elp myself I begun to lie like a good 'un. You 'eard that? It was quite instinkive, but, my! I was in a lather. Then *he* said to the captain, "I struck 'im!" sez 'e, an' I 'eard Brander whistle, an' then I come out with a new set o' lies all about portin' arms an' 'ow the rip growed, same as you 'eard. I done that too before I knew where I was. Then I give Samuelson what-for in barricks when he was dismissed. You should ha' seen 'is kit by the time I'd finished with it. It was all over the bloomin' Fort! Then me an' Jock went off to Mulvaney in 'orspital, five-mile walk, an' I was hoppin' mad. Ouless, 'e knowed it was court-martial for me if I 'it 'im back—'e *must* ha' knowed. Well, I sez to Terence, whisperin' under the 'orspital balcony—"Terence," sez I, "what in 'ell am I to do?" I told 'im all about the row same as you saw. Terence 'e whistles like a bloomin' old bullfinch up there in 'orspital, an' 'e sez, "You ain't to blame," sez 'e. "'Strewhth," sez I, "d'you suppose I've come 'ere five mile in the sun to take blame?" I sez. "I want that young beggar's hide took off. I ain't a bloomin' conscrip'," I sez. "I'm a

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private servin' of the Queen, an' as good a man as 'e is," I sez, "for all his commission an' 'is airs an' 'is money," sez I.'

"What a fool you were," I interrupted. Ortheris, being neither a menial nor an American, but a free man, had no excuse for yelping.

"That's exactly what Terence said. I wonder you set it the same way so pat if 'e 'asn't been talkin' to you. 'E sez to me—"You ought to 'ave more sense," 'e sez, "at your time of life. What differ do it make to you," 'e sez, "whether 'e 'as a commission or no commission? That's none o' your affair. It's between man an' man," 'e sez, "if 'e 'eld a general's commission. Moreover," 'e sez, "you don't look 'andsome 'oppin' about on your 'ind legs like that. Take him away, Jock." Then 'e went inside, an' that's all I got outer Terence. Jock, 'e sez as slow as a march in slow time,—"Stanley," 'e sez, "that young beggar didn't go for to 'it you." "I don't give a damn whether 'e did or 'e didn't. 'It me 'e did," I sez. "Then you've only got to report to Brander," sez Jock. "What d'yer take me for?" I sez, as I was so mad I nearly 'it Jock. An' he got me by the neck an' shoved my 'ead into a bucket o' water in the cook-ouse an' then we went back to the Fort, an' I give Samuelson a little more trouble with 'is kit. 'E sez to me, "I haven't been strook

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without 'ittin' back." "Well, you're goin' to be now," I sez, an' I give 'im one or two for 'issel, an' arxed 'im very polite to 'it back, but he didn't. I'd ha' killed 'im if 'e 'ad. That done me a lot o' good.

'Ouless 'e didn't make no show for some days, --not till after you was gone; an' I was feelin' sick an' miserable, an' didn't know what I wanted, 'cept to black his little eyes good. I 'oped 'e might send me some money for my tunic. Then I'd ha' had it out with him on p'rade and took my chance. Terence was in 'orspital still, you see, an' 'e wouldn't give me no advice.

'The day after you left, Ouless come across me carrying a bucket on fatigue, an' 'e sez to me very quietly, "Ortheris, you've got to come out shootin' with me," 'e sez. I felt like to bunging the bucket in 'is eye, but I didn't. I got ready to go instead. Oh, 'e's a gentleman! We went out together, neither sayin' nothin' to the other till we was well out into the jungle beyond the river with 'igh grass all round,—pretty near that place where I went off my 'ead with you. Then 'e puts his gun down an' sez very quietly: "Ortheris, I strook you on p'rade," 'e sez. "Yes, sir," sez I, "you did." "I've been studying it out by myself," 'e sez. "Oh, you 'ave, 'ave you?" sez I to myself, "an' a nice time you've been about it, you bun-faced little beggar." "Yes, sir," sez I. "What made you

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screen me?" 'e sez. "I don't know," I sez, an' no more I did, nor do. "I can't ask you to exchange," 'e sez. "An' I don't want to exchange myself," sez 'e. "What's comin' now?" I thinks to myself. "Yes, sir," sez I. He looks round at the 'igh grass all about, an' 'e sez to himself more than to me,—"I've got to go through it alone, by myself!" 'E looked so queer for a minute that, s'elp me, I thought the little beggar was going to pray. Then he turned round again an' 'e sez, "What do you think yourself?" 'e sez. "I don't quite see what you mean, sir," I sez. "What would you like?" 'e sez. An' I thought for a minute 'e was goin' to give me money, but 'e run 'is 'and up to the top-button of 'is shootin' coat an' loosed it. "Thank you, sir," I sez. "I'd like that very well," I sez, an' both our coats was off an' put down.'

'Hooray!' I shouted incautiously.

'Don't make a noise on the butts,' said Ouless from the shooting-place. 'It puts the men off.'

I apologised, and Ortheris went on.

'Our coats was off, an' 'e sez, "Are you ready?" sez 'e. "Come on then." I come on, a bit uncertain at first, but he took me one under the chin that warmed me up. I wanted to mark the little beggar an' I hit high, but he went and jabbed me over the heart like a good one. He wasn't so

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strong as me, but he knew more, an' in about two minutes I calls "Time." 'E steps back,—it was in-fightin' then: "Come on when you're ready," 'e sez; and when I had my wind I come on again, 'an I got 'im one on the nose that painted 'is little aristocratic white shirt for 'im. That fetched 'im, an' I knew it quicker nor light. He come all round me, close-fightin', goin' steady for my heart. I held on all I could an' split 'is 'ear, but then I began to hiccup, an' the game was up. I come in to feel if I could throw 'im, an' 'e got me one on the mouth that downed me an'—look 'ere!"

Ortheris raised the left corner of his upper lip. An eye-tooth was wanting.

"'E stood over me an' 'e sez, "Have you 'ad enough?" 'e sez. "Thank you, I 'ave," sez I. He took my 'and an' pulled me up, an' I was pretty shook. "Now," 'e says, "I'll apologise for 'ittin' you. It was all my fault," 'e sez, "an' it wasn't meant for you." "I knowed that, sir," I sez, "an' there's no need for no apology." "Then it's an accident," 'e sez; "an' you must let me pay for the coat; else it'll be stopped out o' your pay." I wouldn't ha' took the money before, but I did then. 'E give me ten rupees,—enough to pay for a coat twice over, 'an we went down to the river to wash our faces, which was well marked. His was special. Then he sez to himself, sputterin'

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the water out of 'is mouth, "I wonder if I done right?" 'e sez. "Yes, sir," sez I; "there's no fear about that." "It's all well for *you*," 'e sez, "but what about the comp'ny?" "Beggin' your pardon, sir," I sez, "I don't think the comp'ny will give no trouble." Then we went shootin', an' when we come back I was feelin' as chirpy as a cricket, an' I took an' rolled Samuelson up an' down the veranda, an' give out to the comp'ny that the difficulty between me an' Lieutenant Ouless was satisfactory put a stop to. I told Jock, o' course, an' Terence. Jock didn't say nothing, but Terence 'e sez: "You're a pair, you two. An', begad, I don't know which was the better man." There ain't nothin' wrong with Ouless. 'E's a gentleman all over, an' 'e's come on as much as B Comp'ny. I lay 'e'd lose 'is commission, tho', if it come out that 'e'd been fightin' with a private. Ho! ho! Fightin' all an afternoon with a bloomin' private like me! What do you think?" he added, brushing the breech of his rifle.

"I think what the umpires said at the sham fight; both sides deserve great credit. But I wish you'd tell me what made you save him in the first place."

"I was pretty sure that 'e 'adn't meant it for me, though that wouldn't ha' made no difference if 'e'd been copped for it. An' 'e was that young

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too that it wouldn't ha' been fair. Besides, if I had ha' done that I'd ha' missed the fight, and I'd ha' felt bad all my time. Don't you see it that way, sir?'

'It was your right to get him cashiered if you chose,' I insisted.

'My right!' Ortheris answered with deep scorn. 'My right! I ain't a recruity to go whinin' about my rights to this an' my rights to that, just as if I couldn't look after myself. My rights! 'Strewth A'mighty! I'm a man.'

The last squad were finishing their shots in a storm of low-voiced chaff. Ouless withdrew to a little distance in order to leave the men at ease, and I saw his face in the full sunlight for a moment, before he hitched up his sword, got his men together, and marched them back to barracks. It was all right. The boy was proven.

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And if ye doubt the tale I tell,
Steer through the South Pacific swell ;
Go where the branching coral hives
Unending strife of endless lives,
Where, leagued about the 'wilder'd boat,
The rainbow jellies fill and float ;
And, lilting where the laver lingers,
The starfish trips on all her fingers ;
Where, 'neath his myriad spines ashock,
The sea-egg ripples down the rock ;
An orange wonder dimly guessed,
From darkness where the cuttles rest,
Moored o'er the darker deeps that hide
The blind white Sea-snake and his bride
Who, drowsing, nose the long-lost ships
Let down through darkness to their lips.

The Palms.

ONCE a priest, always a priest ; once a mason, always a mason ; but once a journalist, always and for ever a journalist. There were three of us, all newspaper men, the

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only passengers on a little tramp steamer that ran where her owners told her to go. She had once been in the Bilbao iron ore business, had been lent to the Spanish Government for service at Manilla ; and was ending her days in the Cape Town coolie-trade, with occasional trips to Madagascar and even as far as England. We found her going to Southampton in ballast, and shipped in her because the fares were nominal. There was Keller, of an American paper, on his way back to the States from palace executions in Madagascar ; there was a burly half-Dutchman, called Zuyland, who owned and edited a paper up country near Johannesburg ; and there was myself, who had solemnly put away all journalism, vowing to forget that I had ever known the difference between an imprint and a stereo advertisement.

Ten minutes after Keller spoke to me, as the *Rathmines* cleared Cape Town, I had forgotten the aloofness I desired to feign, and was in heated discussion on the immorality of expanding telegrams beyond a certain fixed point. Then Zuyland came out of his cabin, and we were all at home instantly, because we were men of the same profession needing no introduction. We annexed the boat formally, broke open the passengers' bath-room door—on the Manilla lines the Dons do not wash—cleaned out the orange-peel and cigar-ends at

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the bottom of the bath, hired a Lascar to shave us throughout the voyage, and then asked each other's names.

Three ordinary men would have quarrelled through sheer boredom before they reached Southampton. We, by virtue of our craft, were anything but ordinary men. A large percentage of the tales of the world, the thirty-nine that cannot be told to ladies and the one that can, are common property coming of a common stock. We told them all, as a matter of form, with all their local and specific variants which are surprising. Then came, in the intervals of steady card-play, more personal histories of adventure and things seen and suffered: panics among white folk, when the blind terror ran from man to man on the Brooklyn Bridge, and the people crushed each other to death they knew not why; fires, and faces that opened and shut their mouths horribly at red-hot window frames; wrecks in frost and snow, reported from the sleet-sheathed rescue-tug at the risk of frost-bite; long rides after diamond thieves; skirmishes on the veldt and in municipal committees with the Boers; glimpses of lazy tangled Cape politics and the mule-rule in the Transvaal; card-tales, horse-tales, woman-tales, by the score and the half hundred; till the first mate, who had seen more than us all put together, but lacked words to clothe

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his tales with, sat open-mouthed far into the dawn.

When the tales were done we picked up cards till a curious hand or a chance remark made one or other of us say, 'That reminds me of a man who—or a business which—' and the anecdotes would continue while the *Rathmines* kicked her way northward through the warm water.

In the morning of one specially warm night we three were sitting immediately in front of the wheel-house, where an old Swedish boatswain whom we called 'Frithiof the Dane' was at the wheel, pretending that he could not hear our stories. Once or twice Frithiof spun the spokes curiously, and Keller lifted his head from a long chair to ask, 'What is it? Can't you get any steerage-way on her?'

'There is a feel in the water,' said Frithiof, 'that I cannot understand. I think that we run down-hills or somethings. She steers bad this morning.'

Nobody seems to know the laws that govern the pulse of the big waters. Sometimes even a landsman can tell that the solid ocean is atilt, and that the ship is working herself up a long unseen slope; and sometimes the captain says, when neither full steam nor fair wind justifies the length of a day's run, that the ship is sagging downhill; but how

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these ups and downs come about has not yet been settled authoritatively.

‘No, it is a following sea,’ said Frithiof; ‘and with a following sea you shall not get good steerageway.’

The sea was as smooth as a duck-pond, except for a regular oily swell. As I looked over the side to see where it might be following us from, the sun rose in a perfectly clear sky and struck the water with its light so sharply that it seemed as though the sea should clang like a burnished gong. The wake of the screw and the little white streak cut by the log-line hanging over the stern were the only marks on the water as far as eye could reach.

Keller rolled out of his chair and went aft to get a pine-apple from the ripening stock that was hung inside the after awning.

‘Frithiof, the log-line has got tired of swimming. It’s coming home,’ he drawled.

‘What?’ said Frithiof, his voice jumping several octaves.

‘Coming home,’ Keller repeated, leaning over the stern. I ran to his side and saw the log-line, which till then had been drawn tense over the stern railing, slacken, loop, and come up off the port quarter. Frithiof called up the speaking-tube to the bridge, and the bridge answered, ‘Yes, nine

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knots.' Then Frithiof spoke again, and the answer was, 'What do you want of the skipper?' and Frithiof bellowed, 'Call him up.'

By this time Zuyland, Keller, and myself had caught something of Frithiof's excitement, for any emotion on shipboard is most contagious. The captain ran out of his cabin, spoke to Frithiof, looked at the log-line, jumped on the bridge, and in a minute we felt the steamer swing round as Frithiof turned her.

'Going back to Cape Town?' said Keller.

Frithiof did not answer, but tore away at the wheel. Then he beckoned us three to help, and we held the wheel down till the *Rathmines* answered it, and we found ourselves looking into the white of our own wake, with the still oily sea tearing past our bows, though we were not going more than half steam ahead.

The captain stretched out his arm from the bridge and shouted. A minute later I would have given a great deal to have shouted too, for one-half of the sea seemed to shoulder itself above the other half, and came on in the shape of a hill. There was neither crest, comb, nor curl-over to it; nothing but black water with little waves chasing each other about the flanks. I saw it stream past and on a level with the *Rathmines'* bow-plates before the steamer hove up her bulk to rise, and I

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argued that this would be the last of all earthly voyages for me. Then we lifted for ever and ever and ever, till I heard Keller saying in my ear, 'The bowels of the deep, good Lord !' and the *Rathmines* stood poised, her screw racing and drumming on the slope of a hollow that stretched downwards for a good half-mile.

We went down that hollow, nose under for the most part, and the air smelt wet and muddy, like that of an emptied aquarium. There was a second hill to climb; I saw that much: but the water came aboard and carried me aft till it jammed me against the wheel-house door, and before I could catch breath or clear my eyes again we were rolling to and fro in torn water, with the scuppers pouring like eaves in a thunderstorm.

'There were three waves,' said Keller; 'and the stokehold's flooded.'

The firemen were on deck waiting, apparently, to be drowned. The engineer came and dragged them below, and the crew, gasping, began to work the clumsy Board of Trade pump. That showed nothing serious, and when I understood that the *Rathmines* was really on the water, and not beneath it, I asked what had happened.

'The captain says it was a blow-up under the sea—a volcano,' said Keller.

'It hasn't warmed anything,' I said. I was

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feeling bitterly cold, and cold was almost unknown in those waters. I went below to change my clothes, and when I came up everything was wiped out in clinging white fog.

‘Are there going to be any more surprises?’ said Keller to the captain.

‘I don’t know. Be thankful you’re alive, gentlemen. That’s a tidal wave thrown up by a volcano. Probably the bottom of the sea has been lifted a few feet somewhere or other. I can’t quite understand this cold spell. Our sea-thermometer says the surface water is 44°, and it should be 68° at least.’

‘It’s abominable,’ said Keller, shivering. ‘But hadn’t you better attend to the fog-horn? It seems to me that I heard something.’

‘Heard! Good heavens!’ said the captain from the bridge, ‘I should think you did.’ He pulled the string of our fog-horn, which was a weak one. It sputtered and choked, because the stoke-hold was full of water and the fires were half-drowned, and at last gave out a moan. It was answered from the fog by one of the most appalling steam-sirens I have ever heard. Keller turned as white as I did, for the fog, the cold fog, was upon us, and any man may be forgiven for fearing a death he cannot see.

‘Give her steam there!’ said the captain to the

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engine-room. ‘Steam for the whistle, if we have to go dead slow.’

We bellowed again, and the damp dripped off the awnings on to the deck as we listened for the reply. It seemed to be astern this time, but much nearer than before.

‘The *Pembroke Castle* on us!’ said Keller; and then, viciously, ‘Well, thank God, we shall sink her too.’

‘It’s a side-wheel steamer,’ I whispered. ‘Can’t you hear the paddles?’

This time we whistled and roared till the steam gave out, and the answer nearly deafened us. There was a sound of frantic threshing in the water, apparently about fifty yards away, and something shot past in the whiteness that looked as though it were gray and red.

‘The *Pembroke Castle* bottom up,’ said Keller, who, being a journalist, always sought for explanations. ‘That’s the colours of a Castle liner. We’re in for a big thing.’

‘The sea is bewitched,’ said Frithiof from the wheel-house. ‘There are *two* steamers!’

Another siren sounded on our bow, and the little steamer rolled in the wash of something that had passed unseen.

‘We’re evidently in the middle of a fleet,’ said Keller quietly. ‘If one doesn’t run us down,

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the other will. Phew! What in creation is that?’

I sniffed, for there was a poisonous rank smell in the cold air—a smell that I had smelt before.

‘If I was on land I should say that it was an alligator. It smells like musk,’ I answered.

‘Not ten thousand alligators could make that smell,’ said Zuyland; ‘I have smelt them.’

‘Bewitched! Bewitched!’ said Frithiof. ‘The sea she is turned upside down, and we are walking along the bottom.’

Again the *Rathmines* rolled in the wash of some unseen ship, and a silver-gray wave broke over the bow, leaving on the deck a sheet of sediment—the gray broth that has its place in the fathomless deeps of the sea. A sprinkling of the wave fell on my face, and it was so cold that it stung as boiling water stings. The dead and most untouched deep water of the sea had been heaved to the top by the submarine volcano—the chill still water that kills all life and smells of desolation and emptiness. We did not need either the blinding fog or that indescribable smell of musk to make us unhappy—we were shivering with cold and wretchedness where we stood.

‘The hot air on the cold water makes this fog,’ said the captain; ‘it ought to clear in a little time.’

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‘Whistle, oh! whistle, and let’s get out of it,’ said Keller.

The captain whistled again, and far and far astern the invisible twin steam-sirens answered us. Their blasting shriek grew louder, till at last it seemed to tear out of the fog just above our quarter, and I cowered while the *Rathmines* plunged bows under on a double swell that crossed.

‘No more,’ said Frithiof, ‘it is not good any more. Let us get away, in the name of God.’

‘Now if a torpedo-boat with a *City of Paris* siren went mad and broke her moorings and hired a friend to help her, it’s just conceivable that we might be carried as we are now. Otherwise this thing is—’

The last words died on Keller’s lips, his eyes began to start from his head, and his jaw fell. Some six or seven feet above the port bulwarks, framed in fog, and as utterly unsupported as the full moon, hung a Face. It was not human, and it certainly was not animal, for it did not belong to this earth as known to man. The mouth was open, revealing a ridiculously tiny tongue—as absurd as the tongue of an elephant; there were tense wrinkles of white skin at the angles of the drawn lips, white feelers like those of a barbel sprung from the lower jaw, and there was no sign of teeth within the mouth. But the horror of the

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face lay in the eyes, for those were sightless—white, in sockets as white as scraped bone, and blind. Yet for all this the face, wrinkled as the mask of a lion is drawn in Assyrian sculpture, was alive with rage and terror. One long white feeler touched our bulwarks. Then the face disappeared with the swiftness of a blindworm popping into its burrow, and the next thing that I remember is my own voice in my own ears, saying gravely to the mainmast, ‘But the air-bladder ought to have been forced out of its mouth, you know.’

Keller came up to me, ashy white. He put his hand into his pocket, took a cigar, bit it, dropped it, thrust his shaking thumb into his mouth and mumbled, ‘The giant gooseberry and the raining frogs! Gimme a light—gimme a light! Say, gimme a light.’ A little bead of blood dropped from his thumb-joint.

I respected the motive, though the manifestation was absurd. ‘Stop, you’ll bite your thumb off,’ I said, and Keller laughed brokenly as he picked up his cigar. Only Zuyländ, leaning over the port bulwarks, seemed self-possessed. He declared later that he was very sick.

‘We’ve seen it,’ he said, turning round. ‘That is it?’

‘What?’ said Keller, chewing the unlighted cigar.

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As he spoke the fog was blown into shreds, and we saw the sea, gray with mud, rolling on every side of us and empty of all life. Then in one spot it bubbled and became like the pot of ointment that the Bible speaks of. From that wide-ringed trouble a Thing came up--a gray and red Thing with a neck--a Thing that bellowed and writhed in pain. Frithiof drew in his breath and held it till the red letters of the ship's name, woven across his jersey, straggled and opened out as though they had been type badly set. Then he said with a little cluck in his throat, 'Ah me! It is blind. *Hur illa!* That thing is blind,' and a murmur of pity went through us all, for we could see that the thing on the water was blind and in pain. Something had gashed and cut the great sides cruelly and the blood was spurting out. The gray ooze of the undermost sea lay in the monstrous wrinkles of the back, and poured away in sluices. The blind white head flung back and battered the wounds, and the body in its torment rose clear of the red and gray waves till we saw a pair of quivering shoulders streaked with weed and rough with shells, but as white in the clear spaces as the hairless, maneless, blind, toothless head. Afterwards, came a dot on the horizon and the sound of a shrill scream, and it was as though a shuttle shot all across the sea in one breath, and a second

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head and neck tore through the levels, driving a whispering wall of water to right and left. The two Things met—the one untouched and the other in its death-throe—male and female, we said, the female coming to the male. She circled round him bellowing, and laid her neck across the curve of his great turtle-back, and he disappeared under water for an instant, but flung up again, grunting in agony while the blood ran. Once the entire head and neck shot clear of the water and stiffened, and I heard Keller saying, as though he was watching a street accident, 'Give him air. For God's sake, give him air.' Then the death-struggle began, with crampings and twistings and jerkings of the white bulk to and fro, till our little steamer rolled again, and each gray wave coated her plates with the gray slime. The sun was clear, there was no wind, and we watched, the whole crew, stokers and all, in wonder and pity, but chiefly pity. The Thing was so helpless, and, save for his mate, so alone. No human eye should have beheld him; it was monstrous and indecent to exhibit him there in trade waters between atlas degrees of latitude. He had been spewed up, mangled and dying, from his rest on the sea-floor, where he might have lived till the Judgment Day, and we saw the tides of his life go from him as an angry tide goes out across rocks in the teeth of a

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landward gale. His mate lay rocking on the water a little distance off, bellowing continually, and the smell of musk came down upon the ship making us cough.

At last the battle for life ended in a batter of coloured seas. We saw the writhing neck fall like a flail, the carcase turn sideways, showing the glint of a white belly and the inset of a gigantic hind leg or flipper. Then all sank, and sea boiled over it, while the mate swam round and round, darting her head in every direction. Though we might have feared that she would attack the steamer, no power on earth could have drawn any one of us from our places that hour. We watched, holding our breaths. The mate paused in her search; we could hear the wash beating along her sides; reared her neck as high as she could reach, blind and lonely in all that loneliness of the sea, and sent one desperate bellow booming across the swells as an oyster-shell skips across a pond. Then she made off to the westward, the sun shining on the white head and the wake behind it, till nothing was left to see but a little pin point of silver on the horizon. We stood on our course again; and the *Rathmines*, coated with the sea-sediment from bow to stern, looked like a ship made gray with terror.

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‘We must pool our notes,’ was the first coherent remark from Keller. ‘We’re three trained journalists—we hold absolutely the biggest scoop on record. Start fair.’

I objected to this. Nothing is gained by collaboration in journalism when all deal with the same facts, so we went to work each according to his own lights. Keller triple-headed his account, talked about our ‘gallant captain,’ and wound up with an allusion to American enterprise in that it was a citizen of Dayton, Ohio, that had seen the sea-serpent. This sort of thing would have discredited the Creation, much more a mere sea tale, but as a specimen of the picture-writing of a half-civilised people it was very interesting. Zuyland took a heavy column and a half, giving approximate lengths and breadths, and the whole list of the crew whom he had sworn on oath to testify to his facts. There was nothing fantastic or flamboyant in Zuyland. I wrote three-quarters of a leaded bourgeois column, roughly speaking, and refrained from putting any journalese into it for reasons that had begun to appear to me.

Keller was insolent with joy. He was going to cable from Southampton to the New York *World*, mail his account to America on the same day, paralyse London with his three columns of loosely knitted headlines, and generally efface the

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earth. 'You'll see how I work a big scoop when I get it,' he said.

'Is this your first visit to England?' I asked.

'Yes,' said he. 'You don't seem to appreciate the beauty of our scoop. It's pyramidal—the death of the sea-serpent! Good heavens alive, man, it's the biggest thing ever vouchsafed to a paper!'

'Curious to think that it will never appear in any paper, isn't it?' I said.

Zuyland was near me, and he nodded quickly.

'What do you mean?' said Keller. 'If you're enough of a Britisher to throw this thing away, I shan't. I thought you were a newspaper man.'

'I am. That's why I know. Don't be an ass, Keller. Remember, I'm seven hundred years your senior, and what your grandchildren may learn five hundred years hence, I learned from my grandfathers about five hundred years ago. You won't do it, because you can't.'

This conversation was held in open sea, where everything seems possible, some hundred miles from Southampton. We passed the Needles Light at dawn, and the lifting day showed the stucco villas on the green and the awful orderliness of England—line upon line, wall upon wall, solid stone dock and monolithic pier. We waited an hour in the Customs shed, and there was ample time for the effect to soak in.

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‘Now, Keller, you face the music. The *Havel* goes out to-day. Mail by her, and I’ll take you to the telegraph-office,’ I said.

I heard Keller gasp as the influence of the land closed about him, cowing him as they say Newmarket Heath cows a young horse unused to open courses.

‘I want to retouch my stuff. Suppose we wait till we get to London?’ he said.

Zuyland, by the way, had torn up his account and thrown it overboard that morning early. His reasons were my reasons.

In the train Keller began to revise his copy, and every time that he looked at the trim little fields, the red villas, and the embankments of the line, the blue pencil plunged remorselessly through the slips. He appeared to have dredged the dictionary for adjectives. I could think of none that he had not used. Yet he was a perfectly sound poker-player and never showed more cards than were sufficient to take the pool.

‘Aren’t you going to leave him a single bellow?’ I asked sympathetically. ‘Remember, everything goes in the States, from a trouser-button to a double-eagle.’

‘That’s just the curse of it,’ said Keller below his breath. ‘We’ve played ’em for suckers so often that when it comes to the golden truth—I’d

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like to try this on a London paper. You have first call there, though.'

'Not in the least. I'm not touching the thing in our papers. I shall be happy to leave 'em all to you; but surely you'll cable it home?'

'No. Not if I can make the scoop here and see the Britishers sit up.'

'You won't do it with three columns of slushy headline, believe me. They don't sit up as quickly as some people.'

'I'm beginning to think that too. Does *nothing* make any difference in this country?' he said, looking out of the window. 'How old is that farmhouse?'

'New. It can't be more than two hundred years at the most.'

'Um. Fields, too?'

'That hedge there must have been clipped for about eighty years.'

'Labour cheap—eh?'

'Pretty much. Well, I suppose you'd like to try the *Times*, wouldn't you?'

'No,' said Keller, looking at Winchester Cathedral. "'Might as well try to electrify a haystack. And to think that the *World* would take three columns and ask for more—with illustrations too! It's sickening.'

'But the *Times* might,' I began.

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Keller flung his paper across the carriage, and it opened in its austere majesty of solid type—opened with the crackle of an encyclopædia.

‘Might! You *might* work your way through the bow-plates of a cruiser. Look at that first page!’

‘It strikes you that way, does it?’ I said. ‘Then I’d recommend you to try a light and frivolous journal.’

‘With a thing like this of mine—of ours? It’s sacred history!’

I showed him a paper which I conceived would be after his own heart, in that it was modelled on American lines.

‘That’s homey,’ he said, ‘but it’s not the real thing. Now, I should like one of these fat old *Times* columns. Probably there’d be a bishop in the office, though.’

When we reached London Keller disappeared in the direction of the Strand. What his experiences may have been I cannot tell, but it seems that he invaded the office of an evening paper at 11.45 a.m. (I told him English editors were most idle at that hour), and mentioned my name as that of a witness to the truth of his story.

‘I was nearly fired out,’ he said furiously at lunch. ‘As soon as I mentioned you, the old man said that I was to tell you that they didn’t want

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any more of your practical jokes, and that you knew the hours to call if you had anything to sell, and that they'd see you condemned before they helped to puff one of your infernal yarns in advance. Say, what record do you hold for truth in this country, anyway?'

'A beauty. You ran up against it, that's all. Why don't you leave the English papers alone and cable to New York? Everything goes over there.'

'Can't you see that's just why?' he repeated.

'I saw it a long time ago. You don't intend to cable, then?'

'Yes, I do,' he answered, in the over-emphatic voice of one who does not know his own mind.

That afternoon I walked him abroad and about, over the streets that run between the pavements like channels of grooved and tongued lava, over the bridges that are made of enduring stone, through subways floored and sided with yard-thick concrete, between houses that are never rebuilt, and by river-steps hewn, to the eye, from the living rock. A black fog chased us into Westminster Abbey, and, standing there in the darkness, I could hear the wings of the dead centuries circling round the head of Litchfield A. Keller, journalist, of Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A., whose mission it was to make the Britishers sit up.

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He stumbled gasping into the thick gloom, and the roar of the traffic came to his bewildered ears.

‘Let’s go to the telegraph-office and cable,’ I said. ‘Can’t you hear the New York *World* crying for news of the great sea-serpent, blind, white, and smelling of musk, stricken to death by a submarine volcano, and assisted by his loving wife to die in mid-ocean, as visualised by an American citizen, the breezy, newsy, brainy newspaper man of Dayton, Ohio? ’Rah for the Buckeye State. Step lively! Both gates! Szz! Boom! Aah!’ Keller was a Princeton man, and he seemed to need encouragement.

‘You’ve got me on your own ground,’ said he, tugging at his overcoat pocket. He pulled out his copy, with the cable forms—for he had written out his telegram—and put them all into my hand, groaning, ‘I pass. If I hadn’t come to your cursed country—if I’d sent it off at Southampton—if I ever get you west of the Alleghannies, if—’

‘Never mind, Keller. It isn’t your fault. It’s the fault of your country. If you had been seven hundred years older you’d have done what I am going to do.’

‘What are you going to do?’

‘Tell it as a lie.’

‘Fiction?’ This with the full-blooded disgust

A MATTER OF FACT

of a journalist for the illegitimate branch of the profession.

‘You can call it that if you like. I shall call it a lie.’

And a lie it has become; for Truth is a naked lady, and if by accident she is drawn up from the bottom of the sea, it behoves a gentleman either to give her a print petticoat or to turn his face to the wall and vow that he did not see.

THE LOST LEGION

WHEN the Indian Mutiny broke out, and a little time before the siege of Delhi, a regiment of Native Irregular Horse was stationed at Peshawur on the frontier of India. That regiment caught what John Lawrence called at the time 'the prevalent mania,' and would have thrown in its lot with the mutineers had it been allowed to do so. The chance never came, for, as the regiment swept off down south, it was headed up by a remnant of an English corps into the hills of Afghanistan, and there the newly-conquered tribesmen turned against it as wolves turn against buck. It was hunted for the sake of its arms and accoutrements from hill to hill, from ravine to ravine, up and down the dried beds of rivers and round the shoulders of bluffs, till it disappeared as water sinks in the sand—this officerless, rebel regiment. The only trace left of its existence to-day is a nominal roll drawn up in neat round hand and countersigned by an officer

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who called himself 'Adjutant, late—Irregular Cavalry.' The paper is yellow with years and dirt, but on the back of it you can still read a pencil note by John Lawrence, to this effect: 'See that the two native officers who remained loyal are not deprived of their estates.—J. L.' Of six hundred and fifty sabres only two stood strain, and John Lawrence in the midst of all the agony of the first months of the Mutiny found time to think about their merits.

That was more than thirty years ago, and the tribesmen across the Afghan border who helped to annihilate the regiment are now old men. Sometimes a graybeard speaks of his share in the massacre. 'They came,' he will say, 'across the border, very proud, calling upon us to rise and kill the English, and go down to the sack of Delhi. But we who had just been conquered by the same English knew that they were over bold, and that the Government could account easily for those down-country dogs. This Hindustani regiment, therefore, we treated with fair words, and kept standing in one place till the redcoats came after them very hot and angry. Then this regiment ran forward a little more into our hills to avoid the wrath of the English, and we lay upon their flanks watching from the sides of the hills till we were well assured that their path was lost behind

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them. Then we came down, for we desired their clothes, and their bridles, and their rifles, and their boots—more especially their boots. That was a great killing—done slowly.' Here the old man will rub his nose, and shake his long snaky locks, and lick his bearded lips, and grin till the yellow tooth-stumps show. 'Yes, we killed them because we needed their gear, and we knew that their lives had been forfeited to God on account of their sin—the sin of treachery to the salt which they had eaten. They rode up and down the valleys, stumbling and rocking in their saddles, and howling for mercy. We drove them slowly like cattle till they were all assembled in one place, the flat wide valley of Sheor Kôt. Many had died from want of water, but there still were many left, and they could not make any stand. We went among them, pulling them down with our hands two at a time, and our boys killed them who were new to the sword. My share of the plunder was such and such—so many guns, and so many saddles. The guns were good in those days. Now we steal the Government rifles, and despise smooth barrels. Yes, beyond doubt we wiped that regiment from off the face of the earth, and even the memory of the deed is now dying. But men say—'

At this point the tale would stop abruptly, and

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it was impossible to find out what men said across the border. The Afghans were always a secretive race, and vastly preferred doing something wicked to saying anything at all. They would be quiet and well-behaved for months, till one night, without word or warning, they would rush a police-post, cut the throats of a constable or two, dash through a village, carry away three or four women, and withdraw, in the red glare of burning thatch, driving the cattle and goats before them to their own desolate hills. The Indian Government would become almost tearful on these occasions. First it would say, 'Please be good and we'll forgive you.' The tribe concerned in the latest depredation would collectively put its thumb to its nose and answer rudely. Then the Government would say: 'Hadn't you better pay up a little money for those few corpses you left behind you the other night?' Here the tribe would temporise, and lie and bully, and some of the younger men, merely to show contempt of authority, would raid another police-post and fire into some frontier mud fort, and, if lucky, kill a real English officer. Then the Government would say: 'Observe; if you really persist in this line of conduct you will be hurt.' If the tribe knew exactly what was going on in India, it would apologise or be rude, according as it learned whether the Government was busy

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with other things, or able to devote its full attention to their performances. Some of the tribes knew to one corpse how far to go. Others became excited, lost their heads, and told the Government to come on. With sorrow and tears, and one eye on the British taxpayer at home, who insisted on regarding these exercises as brutal wars of annexation, the Government would prepare an expensive little field-brigade and some guns, and send all up into the hills to chase the wicked tribe out of the valleys, where the corn grew, into the hill-tops where there was nothing to eat. The tribe would turn out in full strength and enjoy the campaign, for they knew that their women would never be touched, that their wounded would be nursed, not mutilated, and that as soon as each man's bag of corn was spent they could surrender and palaver with the English General as though they had been a real enemy. Afterwards, years afterwards, they would pay the blood-money, driblet by driblet, to the Government and tell their children how they had slain the redcoats by thousands. The only drawback to this kind of picnic-war was the weakness of the redcoats for solemnly blowing up with powder their fortified towers and keeps. This the tribes always considered mean.

Chief among the leaders of the smaller tribes—the little clans who knew to a penny the expense

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of moving white troops against them—was a priest-bandit-chief whom we will call the Gulla Kutta Mullah. His enthusiasm for border murder as an art was almost dignified. He would cut down a mail-runner from pure wantonness, or bombard a mud fort with rifle fire when he knew that our men needed to sleep. In his leisure moments he would go on circuit among his neighbours, and try to incite other tribes to devilry. Also, he kept a kind of hotel for fellow-outlaws in his own village, which lay in a valley called Bersund. Any respectable murderer on that section of the frontier was sure to lie up at Bersund, for it was reckoned an exceedingly safe place. The sole entry to it ran through a narrow gorge which could be converted into a death-trap in five minutes. It was surrounded by high hills, reckoned inaccessible to all save born mountaineers, and here the Gulla Kutta Mullah lived in great state, the head of a colony of mud and stone huts, and in each mud hut hung some portion of a red uniform and the plunder of dead men. The Government particularly wished for his capture, and once invited him formally to come out and be hanged on account of a few of the murders in which he had taken a direct part. He replied:—

‘I am only twenty miles, as the crow flies, from your border. Come and fetch me.’

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‘Some day we will come,’ said the Government, ‘and hanged you will be.’

The Gulla Kutta Mullah let the matter from his mind. He knew that the patience of the Government was as long as a summer day ; but he did not realise that its arm was as long as a winter night. Months afterwards, when there was peace on the border, and all India was quiet, the Indian Government turned in its sleep and remembered the Gulla Kutta Mullah at Bersund with his thirteen outlaws. The movement against him of one single regiment—which the telegrams would have translated as war—would have been highly impolitic. This was a time for silence and speed, and, above all, absence of bloodshed.

You must know that all along the north-west frontier of India there is spread a force of some thirty thousand foot and horse, whose duty it is quietly and unostentatiously to shepherd the tribes in front of them. They move up and down, and down and up, from one desolate little post to another ; they are ready to take the field at ten minutes' notice ; they are always half in and half out of a difficulty somewhere along the monotonous line ; their lives are as hard as their own muscles, and the papers never say anything about them. It was from this force that the Government picked its men.

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One night at a station where the mounted Night Patrol fire as they challenge, and the wheat rolls in great blue-green waves under our cold northern moon, the officers were playing billiards in the mud-walled club-house, when orders came to them that they were to go on parade at once for a night-drill. They grumbled, and went to turn out their men—a hundred English troops, let us say, two hundred Goorkhas, and about a hundred cavalry of the finest native cavalry in the world.

When they were on the parade-ground, it was explained to them in whispers that they must set off at once across the hills to Bersund. The English troops were to post themselves round the hills at the side of the valley ; the Goorkhas would command the gorge and the death-trap, and the cavalry would fetch a long march round and get to the back of the circle of hills, whence, if there were any difficulty, they could charge down on the Mullah's men. But orders were very strict that there should be no fighting and no noise. They were to return in the morning with every round of ammunition intact, and the Mullah and the thirteen outlaws bound in their midst. If they were successful, no one would know or care anything about their work ; but failure meant probably a small border war, in which the Gulla Kutta Mullah would pose as a popular leader

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against a big bullying power, instead of a common border murderer.

Then there was silence, broken only by the clicking of the compass needles and snapping of watch-cases, as the heads of columns compared bearings and made appointments for the rendezvous. Five minutes later the parade-ground was empty ; the green coats of the Goorkhas and the overcoats of the English troops had faded into the darkness, and the cavalry were cantering away in the face of a blinding drizzle.

What the Goorkhas and the English did will be seen later on. The heavy work lay with the horses, for they had to go far and pick their way clear of habitations. Many of the troopers were natives of that part of the world, ready and anxious to fight against their kin, and some of the officers had made private and unofficial excursions into those hills before. They crossed the border, found a dried river bed, cantered up that, walked through a stony gorge, risked crossing a low hill under cover of the darkness, skirted another hill, leaving their hoof-marks deep in some ploughed ground, felt their way along another watercourse, ran over the neck of a spur, praying that no one would hear their horses grunting, and so worked on in the rain and the darkness, till they had left Bersund and its crater of hills a little behind them, and to

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the left, and it was time to swing round. The ascent commanding the back of Bersund was steep, and they halted to draw breath in a broad level valley below the height. That is to say, the men reined up, but the horses, blown as they were, refused to halt. There was unchristian language, the worse for being delivered in a whisper, and you heard the saddles squeaking in the darkness as the horses plunged.

The subaltern at the rear of one troop turned in his saddle and said very softly:—

‘Carter, what the blessed heavens are you doing at the rear? Bring your men up, man.’

There was no answer, till a trooper replied:—

‘Carter Sahib is forward—not there. There is nothing behind us.’

‘There is,’ said the subaltern. ‘The squadron’s walking on its own tail.’

Then the Major in command moved down to the rear swearing softly and asking for the blood of Lieutenant Halley—the subaltern who had just spoken.

‘Look after your rearguard,’ said the Major. ‘Some of your infernal thieves have got lost. They’re at the head of the squadron, and you’re a several kinds of idiot.’

‘Shall I tell off my men, sir?’ said the subaltern sulkily, for he was feeling wet and cold.

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‘Tell ‘em off!’ said the Major. ‘*Whip* ‘em off, by Gad! You’re squandering them all over the place. There’s a troop behind you *now*!’

‘So I was thinking,’ said the subaltern calmly. ‘I have all my men here, sir. Better speak to Carter.’

‘Carter Sahib sends salaam and wants to know why the regiment is stopping,’ said a trooper to Lieutenant Halley.

‘Where under heaven *is* Carter?’ said the Major.

‘Forward with his troop,’ was the answer.

‘Are we walking in a ring, then, or are we the centre of a blessed brigade?’ said the Major.

By this time there was silence all along the column. The horses were still; but, through the drive of the fine rain, men could hear the feet of many horses moving over stony ground.

‘We’re being stalked,’ said Lieutenant Halley.

‘They’ve no horses here. Besides they’d have fired before this,’ said the Major. ‘It’s—it’s villagers’ ponies.’

‘Then our horses would have neighed and spoilt the attack long ago. They must have been near us for half an hour,’ said the subaltern.

‘Queer that we can’t smell the horses,’ said the Major, damping his finger and rubbing it on his nose as he sniffed up wind:

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‘Well, it’s a bad start,’ said the subaltern, shaking the wet from his overcoat. ‘What shall we do, sir?’

‘Get on,’ said the Major. ‘We shall catch it to-night.’

The column moved forward very gingerly for a few paces. Then there was an oath, a shower of blue sparks as shod hooves crashed on small stones, and a man rolled over with a jangle of accoutrements that would have waked the dead.

‘Now we’ve gone and done it,’ said Lieutenant Halley. ‘All the hillside awake, and all the hillside to climb in the face of musketry-fire. This comes of trying to do night-hawk work.’

The trembling trooper picked himself up, and tried to explain that his horse had fallen over one of the little cairns that are built of loose stones on the spot where a man has been murdered. There was no need for reasons. The Major’s big Australian charger blundered next, and the column came to a halt in what seemed to be a very graveyard of little cairns all about two feet high. The manœuvres of the squadron are not reported. Men said that it felt like mounted quadrilles without training and without the music; but at last the horses, breaking rank and choosing their own way, walked clear of the cairns, till every man of the squadron re-formed and drew rein a few yards

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up the slope of the hill. Then, according to Lieutenant Halley, there was another scene very like the one which has been described. The Major and Carter insisted that all the men had not joined rank, and that there were more of them in the rear clicking and blundering among the dead men's cairns. Lieutenant Halley told off his own troopers again and resigned himself to wait. Later on he told me:—

‘I didn’t much know, and I didn’t much care what was going on. The row of that trooper falling ought to have scared half the country, and I would take my oath that we were being stalked by a full regiment in the rear, and *they* were making row enough to rouse all Afghanistan. I sat tight, but nothing happened.’

The mysterious part of the night’s work was the silence on the hillside. Everybody knew that the Gulla Kutta Mullah had his outpost huts on the reverse side of the hill, and everybody expected by the time that the Major had sworn himself into a state of quiet that the watchmen there would open fire. When nothing occurred, they said that the gusts of the rain had deadened the sound of the horses, and thanked Providence. At last the Major satisfied himself (*a*) that he had left no one behind among the cairns, and (*b*) that he was not being taken in the rear by a large

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and powerful body of cavalry. The men's tempers were thoroughly spoiled, the horses were lathered and unquiet, and one and all prayed for the daylight.

They set themselves to climb up the hill, each man leading his mount carefully. Before they had covered the lower slopes or the breastplates had begun to tighten, a thunderstorm came up behind, rolling across the low hills and drowning any noise less than that of cannon. The first flash of the lightning showed the bare ribs of the ascent, the hill-crest standing steely blue against the black sky, the little falling lines of the rain, and, a few yards to their left flank, an Afghan watch-tower, two-storied, built of stone, and entered by a ladder from the upper story. The ladder was up, and a man with a rifle was leaning from the window. The darkness and the thunder rolled down in an instant, and, when the lull followed, a voice from the watch-tower cried, 'Who goes there?'

The cavalry were very quiet, but each man gripped his carbine and stood beside his horse. Again the voice called, 'Who goes there?' and in a louder key, 'O, brothers, give the alarm!' Now, every man in the cavalry would have died in his long boots sooner than have asked for quarter; but it is a fact that the answer to the second call was a long wail of 'Marf karo!

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Marf karo!' which means, 'Have mercy! Have mercy!' It came from the climbing regiment.

The cavalry stood dumbfounded, till the big troopers had time to whisper one to another: 'Mir Khan, was that thy voice? Abdullah, didst thou call?' Lieutenant Halley stood beside his charger and waited. So long as no firing was going on he was content. Another flash of lightning showed the horses with heaving flanks and nodding heads, the men, white eye-balled, glaring beside them, and the stone watch-tower to the left. This time there was no head at the window, and the rude iron-clamped shutter that could turn a rifle bullet was closed.

'Go on, men,' said the Major. 'Get up to the top at any rate.' The squadron toiled forward, the horses wagging their tails and the men pulling at the bridles, the stones rolling down the hillside and the sparks flying. Lieutenant Halley declares that he never heard a squadron make so much noise in his life. They scrambled up, he said, as though each horse had eight legs and a spare horse to follow him. Even then there was no sound from the watch-tower, and the men stopped exhausted on the ridge that overlooked the pit of darkness in which the village of Bersund lay. Girths were loosed, curb-chains shifted, and saddles adjusted, and the men dropped down among the stones.

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Whatever might happen now, they had the upper ground of any attack.

The thunder ceased, and with it the rain, and the soft thick darkness of a winter night before the dawn covered them all. Except for the sound of falling water among the ravines below, everything was still. They heard the shutter of the watch-tower below them thrown back with a clang, and the voice of the watcher calling: 'Oh, Hafiz Ullah!'

The echoes took up the call, 'La-la-la!' And an answer came from the watch-tower hidden round the curve of the hill, 'What is it, Shahbaz Khan?'

Shahbaz Khan replied in the high-pitched voice of the mountaineer: 'Hast thou seen?'

The answer came back: 'Yes. God deliver us from all evil spirits!'

There was a pause, and then: 'Hafiz Ullah, I am alone! Come to me!'

'Shahbaz Khan, I am alone also; but I dare not leave my post!'

'That is a lie; thou art afraid.'

A longer pause followed, and then: 'I am afraid. Be silent! They are below us still. Pray to God and sleep.'

The troopers listened and wondered, for they could not understand what save earth and stone could lie below the watch-towers.

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Shahbaz Khan began to call again: 'They are below us. I can see them. For the pity of God come over to me, Hafiz Ullah! My father slew ten of them. Come over!'

Hafiz Ullah answered in a very loud voice, 'Mine was guiltless. Hear, ye Men of the Night, neither my father nor my blood had any part in that sin. Bear thou thy own punishment, Shahbaz Khan.'

'Oh, some one ought to stop those two chaps crowing away like cocks there,' said Lieutenant Halley, shivering under his rock.

He had hardly turned round to expose a new side of him to the rain before a bearded, long-locked, evil-smelling Afghan rushed up the hill, and tumbled into his arms. Halley sat upon him, and thrust as much of a sword-hilt as could be spared down the man's gullet. 'If you cry out, I kill you,' he said cheerfully.

The man was beyond any expression of terror. He lay and quaked, grunting. When Halley took the sword-hilt from between his teeth, he was still inarticulate, but clung to Halley's arm, feeling it from elbow to wrist.

'The Rissala! The dead Rissala!' he gasped. 'It is down there!'

'No; the Rissala, the very much alive Rissala. It is up here,' said Halley, unshipping his watering-

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bridle, and fastening the man's hands. 'Why were you in the towers so foolish as to let us pass?'

'The valley is full of the dead,' said the Afghan. 'It is better to fall into the hands of the English than the hands of the dead. They march to and fro below there. I saw them in the lightning.'

He recovered his composure after a little, and whispering, because Halley's pistol was at his stomach, said: 'What is this? There is no war between us now, and the Mullah will kill me for not seeing you pass!'

'Rest easy,' said Halley; 'we are coming to kill the Mullah, if God please. His teeth have grown too long. No harm will come to thee unless the daylight shows thee as a face which is desired by the gallows for crime done. But what of the dead regiment?'

'I only kill within my own border,' said the man, immensely relieved. 'The Dead Regiment is below. The men must have passed through it on their journey—four hundred dead on horses, stumbling among their own graves, among the little heaps—dead men all, whom we slew.'

'Whew!' said Halley. 'That accounts for my cursing Carter and the Major cursing me. Four hundred sabres, eh? No wonder we thought there were a few extra men in the troop. Kurruk Shah,' he whispered to a grizzled native officer

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that lay within a few feet of him, 'hast thou heard anything of a dead Rissala in these hills?'

'Assuredly,' said Kurruk Shah with a grim chuckle. 'Otherwise, why did I, who have served the Queen for seven-and-twenty years, and killed many hill-dogs, shout aloud for quarter when the lightning revealed us to the watch-towers? When I was a young man I saw the killing in the valley of Sheor-Kôt there at our feet, and I know the tale that grew up therefrom. But how can the ghosts of unbelievers prevail against us who are of the Faith? Strap that dog's hands a little tighter, Sahib. An Afghan is like an eel.'

'But a dead Rissala,' said Halley, jerking his captive's wrist. 'That is foolish talk, Kurruk Shah. The dead are dead. Hold still, *sag*! The Afghan wriggled.

'The dead are dead, and for that reason they walk at night. What need to talk? We be men; we have our eyes and ears. Thou canst both see and hear them, down the hillside,' said Kurruk Shah composedly.

Halley stared and listened long and intently. The valley was full of stifled noises, as every valley must be at night; but whether he saw or heard more than was natural Halley alone knows, and he does not choose to speak on the subject.

At last, and just before the dawn, a green

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rocket shot up from the far side of the valley of Bersund, at the head of the gorge, to show that the Goorkhas were in position. A red light from the infantry at left and right answered it, and the cavalry burnt a white flare. Afghans in winter are late sleepers, and it was not till full day that the Gulla Kutta Muliah's men began to straggle from their huts, rubbing their eyes. They saw men in green, and red, and brown uniforms, leaning on their arms, neatly arranged all round the crater of the village of Bersund, in a cordon that not even a wolf could have broken. They rubbed their eyes the more when a pink-faced young man, who was not even in the Army, but represented the Political Department, tripped down the hillside with two orderlies, rapped at the door of the Gulla Kutta Mullah's house, and told him quietly to step out and be tied up for safe transport. That same young man passed on through the huts, tapping here one cateran and there another lightly with his cane; and as each was pointed out, so he was tied up, staring hopelessly at the crowned heights around where the English soldiers looked down with incurious eyes. Only the Mullah tried to carry it off with curses and high words, till a soldier who was tying his hands said:—

‘None o’ your lip! Why didn’t you come out when you was ordered, instead o’ keepin’ us awake

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all night? You're no better than my own barrack-sweeper, you white-eaded old polyanthus! Kim up!'

Half an hour later the troops had gone away with the Mullah and his thirteen friends. The dazed villagers were looking ruefully at a pile of broken muskets and snapped swords, and wondering how in the world they had come so to miscalculate the forbearance of the Indian Government.

It was a very neat little affair, neatly carried out, and the men concerned were unofficially thanked for their services.

Yet it seems to me that much credit is also due to another regiment whose name did not appear in the brigade orders, and whose very existence is in danger of being forgotten.

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